00026084

Photo by] [Window & Grove

MAJOR-GENERAL HECTOR ARCHIBALD MACDONALD, C.B., D.S.O.

Digitized with financial assistance from
An Initiative by
H T Parekh FOUNDATION
HDFC
WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH
on 27 November, 2018

HECTOR MACDONALD

OR

THE PRIVATE WHO BECAME A GENERAL

A Highland Laddie's Life and Laurels

BY

THOMAS F. G. COATES

26034
ac

WITH PORTRAIT

yy.t-52

ROYAL ASIATIC LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC

London
S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO.
8 & 9, PATERNOSTER ROW
1900

00026084

PREFACE

IN presenting, on behalf of Highland Societies, a sword of honour to "the Hero of Omdurman," at a public dinner in May of last year, the Duke of Atholl, praising Major-General Hector Macdonald, referred to him as "a son of the soil." That is an accurate description of him—a fact of which he is properly proud. He was the son of a Ross-shire crofter and mason, born on the farm, and upon the rough croft soil Hector Macdonald grew up strong, brave, hard-working, high-principled.

Proceeding from the farm and kindred work to a business establishment he enlisted whilst still in his teens. From the ranks he has risen so rapidly that, being now in the prime of life, he is a Major-General, a C.B., and an Aide-de-Camp to the Queen. He already holds sufficient medals and decorations to well cover his broad chest, and he is now winning further laurels in South Africa, to which country he was sent from India to fill the place at the head of the Highland Brigade which had been vacated by the death of General Wauchope at the battle of Magersfontein. Soon after taking

up his command there Macdonald made a gallant move at Koodoosberg, and was later wounded at Paardeberg. Although the wound was severe, and he was incapacitated from duty for a time, he remained at the front and got out of the doctor's hands in time to march with Lord Roberts' army into Bloemfontein, well on the way to Pretoria.

"Fighting Mac's" remarkable career is one which many a British lad will long in the future to emulate. The story of how he rose from a private to be a general seems well worth the telling. It is a tale of great soldiers and great deeds. It is a record of our conflicts in Afghanistan; of the trouble with the Boers in 1881 and to-day; of the transformation of Egypt from degradation and ruin to honour and prosperity; of the removal of the savage rule of the Mahdi in the Soudan and its replacement by an enlightened Egyptian government under British guidance.

In these operations Hector Macdonald has been engaged and has distinguished himself, as this compilation shows, not alone as a soldier but as an organiser, a trainer, and leader of men, and a skilful general.

T. F. G. C.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	BIRTH AND PARENTAGE—"THE APOSTLE OF THE NORTH"—"THE MECCA OF THE NORTH"—CROFTERDOM—THE MULBUIE—DOING "ORRA" WORK—SOME INTERESTING STORIES—A HIGHLAND DAME'S SUPERSTITION	9
II.	HECTOR AT SCHOOL—"A HARDIE STIRKIE"—A FAVOURITE OF HIS MASTER—"LEADER IN EVERYTHING"—SCHOOLBOY FIGHTS—A PITCHED BATTLE—HECTOR AS GENERAL IN COMMAND—AT WORK ON THE CROFT—FARM AND STABLE EMPLOYMENT—HIS "CANTRIPS IN THE SADDLE"—A PONY STORY.	19
III.	LIFE AS A DRAPER'S APPRENTICE—"A CHEERFUL AND GENTLE MASTER"—HANKERING FOR THE QUEEN'S SERVICE—HIS FIRST DRILL INSTRUCTOR—AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE FOR HIS EMPLOYER—PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS—EXTRACTS FROM AN ORIGINAL LETTER—A REMARKABLE EPISTLE—"THE MAIN ATTRIBUTES OF A SOLDIER"	23
IV.	GALLANT GORDON HIGHLANDERS — "KISSED INTO EXISTENCE" — "THE COCK O' THE NORTH" — EGYPT AND THE PENINSULA — THE BATTLE OF CORUNNA—DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S APPRECIATION —VITTORIA — AT WATERLOO — WHERE THE FIGHT WAS HOTTEST—THE CRIMEA CAMPAIGN—SERVICES IN INDIA — DARGAI — THE JOINING OF HECTOR MACDONALD	32

CHAP. PAGE

V. A SOLDIER IN INDIA—SEVERE WORK AND STEADY PROGRESS — PRIVATE TO CORPORAL — CORPORAL TO COLOUR-SERGEANT—WITH THE PRINCE OF WALES AT LAHORE — PROCLAIMING "THE EMPRESS OF INDIA" AT DELHI—DESCRIPTION OF THE SCENE—THE OFFICER AND THE NEW SERGEANT . . . 41

VI. TROUBLES IN AFGHANISTAN — SHERE ALI AND THE BRITISH — MURDER OF MAJOR CAVAGNARI — GENERAL ROBERTS STARTS FOR KABUL — GORDON HIGHLANDERS TO THE FRONT—AN AMBUSH—A HOT ENGAGEMENT — GALLANT HIGHLAND LADDIES — HECTOR MACDONALD'S BRAVERY—STEPS UP THE LADDER OF FAME—THE BATTLE OF CHARASIAB—GENERAL ROBERTS AND "FIGHTING MAC" . . 50

VII. AVENGING CAVAGNARI—THE MAD PRIEST'S WORK—AYOOB KHAN'S ADVANCE ON KANDAHAR—THE MAIWAND OPERATIONS—A BRITISH DISASTER—HOW IT WAS TO BE RETRIEVED—THE BRITISH GENERAL'S PLAN 62

VIII. THE GREAT MARCH FROM KABUL—DIFFICULTIES OF THE ROUTE—IN SIGHT OF THE ENEMY—THE BATTLE OF KANDAHAR — HECTOR MACDONALD'S WORK — FROM SERGEANT TO LIEUTENANT 71

IX. A TRIP TO THE CAPE—AT WAR WITH THE BOERS—ON MAJUBA HILL—DISASTER TO THE BRITISH FORCE—A DREADFUL SLAUGHTER—MACDONALD FORCED TO SURRENDER—HOW HE FOUGHT FOR VICTORY—BOER GENERAL AND "FIGHTING MAC' 85

X. AT WORK IN EGYPT—ARMY ORGANISATION—DRILLING THE NATIVES AND THE SOUDANESE—A TRANSFORMATION SCENE—SIR A. MILNER'S APPRECIATION . 95

XI. TO GORDON'S RELIEF—IN THE "TOO LATE" EXPEDITION — GARRISON ADJUTANT AT ASSIOUT — LIEU-

CHAP. PAGE

TENANT TO CAPTAIN — SUAKIN OPERATIONS — GEMAIZAH SUCCESSES AND REWARDS—TOSKI ENGAGEMENT—THE D.S.O.—CAPTURE OF TOKAR—THE OSMANIEH ORDER—CAPTAIN TO MAJOR — DONGOLA EXPEDITION — FIRKIT — HAFIR — PROMOTION TO BREVET-LIEUTENANT-COLONEL 102

XII. THE ATBARA CAMPAIGN—AN UNEXPECTED MOVEMENT—MACDONALD'S SOUDANESE TO THE FRONT—ANOTHER RAPID MARCH—THE ATTACK ON MAHMOUD'S FORCES—BRILLIANT BRITISH SUCCESS—HOW "OLD MAC'S" MEN ACTED 115

XIII. AFTER ATBARA—THE NEW CAMPAIGN—ON TO THE SOUTH — CRUSHING THE KHALIFA — THE GREAT BATTLE—"THE COCKPIT OF THE FIGHT"—GALLANT SOUDANESE—"THE HERO OF OMDURMAN"—C.B. AND A.D.C. TO THE QUEEN—LIEUTENANT-COLONEL TO BRIGADIER-GENERAL 125

XIV. MACDONALD'S HOMECOMING—A HIGHLAND GREETING TO A HIGHLANDER—PRESENTATIONS AND SPEECHES—ARMY NEEDS—HOW TO GET ON IN THE SERVICE—VOLUNTEERS AND REGULARS—"I BELIEVE CONSCRIPTION WILL COME" 137

XV. FROM INDIA TO SOUTH AFRICA—HIS COUNTRY'S CALL AT A CRITICAL MOMENT—AT WORK UNDER LORD ROBERTS AGAIN—LEADING THE HIGHLAND BRIGADE AS SUCCESSOR TO WAUCHOPE—THE KOODOOSBERG RECONNAISSANCE — FIGHTING AGAINST CRONJE — BATTLE OF PAARDEBERG—MACDONALD WOUNDED—THE SURRENDER OF CRONJE—MACDONALD ENTERS BLOEMFONTEIN WITH LORD ROBERTS—A RELATIVE'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE HIGHLAND GENERAL . . 149

Uniform with this, and same price.

BADEN-POWELL: The Hero of Mafeking.
By W. FRANCIS AITKEN.

HECTOR M'ACDONALD

OR

The Private who became a General

CHAPTER I

Birth and Parentage—"The Apostle of the North"—"The Mecca of the North"—Crofterdom—The Mulbuie—Doing "Orra" Work—Some Interesting Stories—A Highland Dame's Superstition.

MAJOR-GENERAL HECTOR ARCHIBALD MACDONALD, C.B., D.S.O., and A.D.C. to the Queen, now fighting for the flag in South Africa, is one of the most gallant and deservedly popular officers in the British Army. His position is great and will become greater; yet he is only forty-eight years of age, and he started life in humble circumstances in the crofter districts of Scotland. The world of fiction constantly supplies amazing stories of the progress of individuals. The world of fact sometimes equals and excels these imaginative careers. Few have been more brilliant, and none have been more honourable than that of

the gallant Highland laddie whose life-story it is my purpose briefly to recount. It is the story of a man of fine courage, of sound judgment, of tenacity of purpose, of clearness of vision, quick to devise, prompt and unfailing in execution; and though his great achievements have all been on the battlefield, in the thickest of the fight, it is at the same time the story of a man of keen sympathy, of large heart, a good soldier, an affectionate son and true friend.

Addressing the boys of the Duke of York's Military School last summer, Lord Wolseley said that "the days were now long gone in which it could be said that only birth could put men forward; now worth was regarded more than birth. In the Khartoum Campaign, amongst those who led Her Majesty's and the Egyptian troops was one whose name had now become a household word, not only in Scotland where he was born, but in every part of the Queen's dominions. It would be difficult to find an officer who had led his men better in action than had Brigadier-General Macdonald, who entered the army as a private soldier determined to rise, and if possible, reach a high position, and had not only become a colonel (1899), but had the honour of being an aide-de-camp to the Queen." In the case of this gallant soldier worth alone has indeed won for him many distinctions.

It was in Ross-shire that Hector Macdonald first saw the light. The Sutors of Cromarty—twin giants of the deep, bold, forbidding, and bleak

—tower, over the tossing billows of the North Sea, and cast a great, gloomy shadow upon the narrow channel of restless, rolling water, which forms the greeny deep defile leading into one of the most picturesque lagoons in the British Isles. At the inner base of the South Sutor—behind which steamships, sailing vessels, great and small, and the humble fishing-boat ofttimes seek shelter—lies the pretty little town of Cromarty, nestling behind the great rock, as if trustful of its protection from the rude, cutting, eastern blast that often sweeps coastwards from the boisterous sea once haunted by the hardy Viking and the bold Dane. This little burgh of Cromarty, like the peninsula of which it is the "capital," has produced many famous men—not the least of whom are Hugh Miller, the geologist, and Sir Thomas Urquhart, the translator of Rabelais. This peninsula—known as the Black Isle—originally formed part of three counties, Ross, Cromarty, and Nairn, but it is now included in the united counties of Ross and Cromarty, and it is one of the most richly wooded and fertile districts in the Highlands of Scotland. It is bounded by the Beauly Firth on one side and by the Cromarty Firth on the other, and, like a huge sea serpent, it twists away back from its head, the South Sutor, a distance of some eighteen miles until it joins the rugged mainland at the mouth of the river Conon, near Dingwall.

The parish of Urquhart, or Ferintosh, which

forms a great part of this peninsula at the junction with the mainland near Dingwall, is historic, and that, too, for more reasons than one. It is specially famous, however, in Scottish ecclesiastical history on account of many things, but particularly on account of its once Free Church minister, the late Dr. Macdonald, "the Apostle of the North," of whose ministration Hector Macdonald's father, and Hector himself, as a boy, had the benefit. Indeed, one pious Highland lady, after the battle of Omdurman, wrote to a local paper suggesting that General Hector Macdonald was specially protected by Providence, through his early connection with the holy "Apostle of the North"—her argument apparently being that bullets travelling in Hector Macdonald's direction were diverted so that they might find a billet in some "Tommy" who had not the benefit of an early connection with Dr. Macdonald. Considering the General's many narrow escapes, notably at Majuba Hill, it is not surprising that the superstitious Highland dame should thus advertise her belief in the occult.

Ferintosh is also historic on account of its sacred burn—the Mecca of the North—where at communion-time, in the golden days of leafy autumn, the simple inhabitants of the Northern Highlands—strong in the faith and afire with fervour—are wont to assemble to hear the orthodox Free Church divines preach the words they hold

dearer than life. In the days when Dr. Macdonald held sway in Ferintosh and Dr. Kennedy in Dingwall, thousands of people from the uttermost parts of Scotland used to congregate there to sing Psalms, and listen to the utterances of their oracles. Hector Macdonald must have often taken part in these great gatherings.

But above and beyond these things, this parish is historic over all previous estimate on account of its containing within its wide bounds a centre of "crofterdom" called the Mulbuie, in one of the humble farms of which—Rootfield—was ushered into the world the boy Celt—Hector Archibald Macdonald — who, from herd-boy, stable-lad, apprentice draper, and private soldier, has risen to be general in command of the gallant Highland Brigade, to the glory and honour of the British Army and his native land.

Away back in the fifties this crofting district of the Mulbuie was about as forbidding, as a place of residence for the poor tiller of the soil, as could be found even in the West of Ireland; but here, nevertheless, the rugged, poorly fed, but industrious crofters—aided by their wives and families—tore a precarious subsistence from a stony, hungry soil, reclaimed from what had been for centuries the tough, rearing ground of whin and heather, and the rooty resting-place of boulders and countless jaggy stones. The birthplace of Hector Macdonald is not to-day what it was when Hector's father—

honest, hard-working William Macdonald—struggled to make ends meet, and to feed and clothe his five sons, and give them "a good education"—which, of course, in such circumstances and in those days meant a rigid course of discipline, and uncompromising exercise in the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The crofts of the Mulbuie were then—as many of them are now—as like as peas. They were low buildings—often lopsided—with rough walls, once gorgeous in their coatings of whitewash, but usually darkly stained with the rain-water flowing down from the rugged roof thatched with mud and straw, which thatch was usually blackened and begrimed with the reek that came from the square box lums at the gable-end of the building. In front, or at the back, or ends of the cot, were irregularly shaped pieces of ground, divided from the rough outrun by dykes of jaggy stones laid loosely one upon the other. These pieces of land were what they called their arable land, and on these patches they grew potatoes and turnips, and even contrived to force somewhat patchy growths of the more hardy cereals; for it was ground upon which only the hardy could thrive, and it was perhaps no disadvantage to Hector Macdonald that he was reared upon such stubborn and unyielding soil. Many of the crofters kept a cow, all had a pig or two, while perhaps one here and there—richer than his neighbours—could boast of a veteran horse,

which was lent out to deserving neighbours on occasion.

The land was roughly tilled with the most primitive implements, and yielded a poor return. In those dark days the crofters of the Highlands had no security of tenure, and after all their labouring in building up a rough home on the sterile waste, they only sat on suffrage, paying to the landlord a small annual rental of from thirty shillings to two or three pounds. So poor were these struggling beings that in many cases they could not even pay this small rent, with the result that some of them were often a score years in arrear.

The crofters, in many instances, added to their income from the croft by engaging in casual labour as tradesmen or as unskilled workers. Hector's father was a "dry-dyker"—a builder of rough stone dykes and walls of houses, and he travelled in different parts of Sutherland, Ross, and Inverness, working at jobs. One day he went to Stratherrick, and there he met Ann Boyd, his future wife. Ann's father, John Boyd, was a descendant from the Ayrshire Boyds, who were Earls of Kilmarnock, and he rented a fairly large farm in Stratherrick. Ann was a strapping, comely lass, and she fell in love with the crofter-mason, and shortly after the two were married.

Hector's father, with the aid of the masonry business, was "doing fairly well," and it is interesting to know that now the small farm of Rootfield is

tenanted by William Macdonald, a brother of the General. He is a man of great tact and capacity, the leading man, and greatly respected, in the district, a County Councillor and a Justice of the Peace for the County of Ross.

Hector's father has been described to me by a near relative, who knew him well, as a man of fine and strong character—possessed of a sweet, gentle temperament. Like most Highland fathers he was moved by a deep sense of his duty to his family of sons in the way of upbringing and education, and with this aim he toiled hard, stinted himself, and feared God in all his ways. His fare was of the simplest, as is proved by the following story :—

A neighbouring farmer—on whose lands and steading Hector and his brothers did "orra" work (*i.e.*, odd jobs), and who took a great interest in the worthy couple and their family—one day came upon the old man eating his midday meal, his dining-room being the bank at the side of the road, and he sat his back against the dyke, which he was engaged in repairing. The farmer noticed that the old man's dinner consisted of a piece of dry oatcake. He told him to go down to the farm and get some dinner, for which the old man thanked him, but explained that he was tired, and that the travelling to and from the farm would so wear him out that he would be unable to do his usual fair day's work. The oatcake satisfied his little wants,

and he would just have to work away. The son, Hector, when at times the fight was hot and the danger great, has shown that he has inherited that same determination, "just to work away."

Such was the father of the future General, and he toiled bravely on—even in his drooping years—with a determination to do his duty to his sons only equalled by the determination of his youngest son to do his duty to his Queen and country—and it is matter for regret that the good father did not live to see his most distinguished son rise from obscurity to be one of the greatest of our British Generals, and the hero of his native country.

Hector's mother, a wee bit disconsolate when Hector 'listed, happily lived to see with pride her son's earlier promotions. She saw him become a captain before she passed away. She was a lady of strong intellect and will, of great decision and force of character, all which she has transmitted to her son. To use a common Scotch phrase—Hector and his brothers "took after their mother." At any rate, it was from his mother that Hector inherited those square, hard, inflexible jaws, and those steely, keen, grey eyes, set deep under a stern forehead. All who have seen Hector Macdonald will have noticed these characteristics, denoting firmness of resolution and strength of will.

Before closing these remarks about the relatives of Hector it may well be mentioned that the only one of John Boyd's family now alive is his daughter

Margaret (Mrs. Macdonald, Ardochy, Inverness-shire). Ardochy is the favourite holiday resort of the General, and his aunt there is a kind of "second mother." Of her the General is very fond, and those who have met her are charmed with her sweet and gracious manners and delighted with the pride she takes in her now famous relative. This lady is the mother of the Rev. James Macdonald, M.A., B.D., of Dornoch, to whom and also to Mr. A. M. Ross, of Dingwall, I am indebted for many of the interesting facts I have been able to collect about Hector's early surroundings.

CHAPTER II

Hector at school—"A hardie stirkie"—A favourite of his master—"Leader in everything"—Schoolboy fights—A pitched battle—Hector as general in command—At work on the croft—Farm and stable employment—His "cantrips in the saddle"—A pony story.

HECTOR ARCHIBALD MACDONALD was one of five sons. He was the youngest of the five. There was nothing extraordinary about his early days. He was just an ordinary Highland boy—"A hardie stirkie," as the crofters would call him. If there was one trait which marked him specially it was a resolute independence of character. He was educated at the parish school, and was quick to learn. He made good progress, and was a favourite with his teacher, a conscientious and painstaking parochial schoolmaster.

Like most other boys Hector was more fond of the open air than of the schoolroom. While sticking to his lessons when he had to do them, the sooner they were ended the better he was pleased. He was one of the strongest of a class of boys who could hardly be called weaklings. Almost

always bright and full of life, he was a leader in every sport and play. He was exceedingly kind-hearted, and one of his old schoolfellows says of him: "He had the strength and courage of a lion, and the heart of a lamb." Always ready to defend the weak, his love of fair play was so strong that he never hesitated to tackle a boy, however much bigger than himself, if he thought a weaker boy was being wronged.

Another of his old schoolfellows tells the following story: Going home from school one day he came across a wee boy weeping bitterly, the big tears running down his cheeks. He asked the mite why he cried, and was told that a bigger boy had stolen his slate-pencil. Hector immediately declared war, and set out to settle scores with the offender. He caught him, and after securing the stolen slate-pencil, gave the bully a good hiding.

In those days the schoolboys had many pitched battles, and in these conflicts Hector was always to the front as general in command of one of the armies. A great pitched battle, in which the future General distinguished himself, was once fought on a field behind the school. The contending forces were armed with sticks, but their most serious weapons were stones, which they could throw with force and accuracy. Hector led the van in attacking a division strongly posted behind a dyke, and he was for some time without supports, exposed to the concentrated fire of three "sharpshooters,"

who assailed him from different points. Hector, nothing dismayed, dodged the flying stones, until one of the enemy exhausted his ammunition. Shouting, "Charge!" he made for this unfortunate individual, who hastily retreated. Hector's army then took courage and advanced at the double, the result being that the enemy, dismayed at the furious onslaught, turned tail and ran, and were pursued by Hector and his army for nearly a mile. He loved these battles, and thus in his boyish days betrayed some sign of his inherent capabilities for warfare.

After leaving school he assisted his father on the croft, and helped to swell the not too large family income by herding. He was subsequently employed by Mr. Robertson, who is now the proprietor of the National Hotel, Dingwall, and junior bailie of that town. He acted as stable-boy, ran messages, and did "orra" work about the farm. Bailie Robertson says he was a willing lad, very painstaking, and thoroughly trustworthy, "but," added the General's former employer, "he was an awful bad horseman, and many a good thumping I gave him for his cantrips in the saddle."

Hector was very fond of his master, but, knowing how keen he was for good horsemanship, he often concealed mishaps to himself and his pony. Hector was wont to ride to and from Dingwall with messages, and coming home one night the pony stumbled, and the young rider was thrown heavily

to the ground, dislocating his shoulder. He said nothing to Mr. Robertson about the occurrence, but the lad's movements were so suspicious, and his manner so unusual, that Mr. Robertson suspected there was something wrong, but could not find out what it was. Hector suffered much pain through neglect of the injury, and it was only a few years ago that he informed Mr. Robertson of the accident.

One night, when well on his way to Dingwall, Mr. Robertson discovered that he had left his gloves behind him. He turned his horse and galloped back to the farm. Much to his surprise, on turning the corner, he discovered Hector galloping round one of the fields on a pony with a fork for a sword, and imitating his master and giving out orders in a stentorian voice—to an imaginary regiment. The sudden appearance of Mr. Robertson so upset the aspiring field officer that he fell off the pony's back.

CHAPTER III

Life as a draper's apprentice—"A cheerful and gentle master"—Hankering for the Queen's service—His first drill instructor—An unpleasant surprise for his employer—Plea for forgiveness—Extracts from an original letter—A remarkable epistle—"The main attributes of a soldier."

"NOW, boys, as there are no reporters here, I will give you a speech all to yourselves. That speech is—'Be good boys, join the Volunteers or Army, and don't forget your parents, Queen and country."—Colonel Hector Macdonald at Inverness in May, 1899.

Hector Macdonald was a good boy, but to his parents it soon became evident that he was anxious to be a soldier. This was a painful discovery for them. They endeavoured to turn his thoughts from what they considered a fatal ambition. To check it, as they hoped, Hector's mother decided to send him to a trade, and he was sent to a draper's shop in the neighbouring town of Dingwall. Soon afterwards, in 1868, he went to Mr. William Mackay at the Clan Tartan and Tweed Warehouse, Association Buildings, Inverness, and applied to be

allowed to serve as an apprentice to the business. Mr. Mackay was struck with the brightness of the laddie and engaged him on the usual terms, namely, that he was to come into the business for a month's trial, and, if agreeable to both parties, then the engagement was to last for five years. Hector stood his month's trial satisfactorily, and the arrangement for him to stay for the five years was then made.

Hector had a good master in Mr. Mackay. The master thought well of the boy, and the lad had a considerable opinion of his employer. Things went very well indeed for a long time. Hector did his duty well, but there were subtle influences at work which were eventually to turn the draper's boy into a soldier and a leader of men. The story of how that came about was related to a newspaper representative in the course of an interview by Mr. William Mathie, of Redhill, Surrey. Mr. Mathie, who is now engaged at the Royal Ordnance Survey offices at Redhill, enjoys the distinction of having been the first to instruct the future "Fighting Mac" in his drill. It was in the latter part of 1869, or the beginning of 1870, that Mr. Mathie, who had just finished his training as a Royal Engineer at Chatham, went to Inverness, and there made the acquaintance of Hector Macdonald, who was at Mr. Mackay's warehouse. Macdonald and Mathie lodged together at the house of a tailor named McLeod, in Huntley Street, and great things followed upon that. When

Mr. Mathie and Hector Macdonald first met, the latter was a high-spirited youth, standing about 5 ft. 7 in. in his socks, slight in build, but "hard as iron." There was a recreation ground at Inverness known as the Highlands. Here, in the evenings, Mathie and Macdonald used to meet, with McLeod's sons and other "braw hielandmen," to compete in friendly rivalry in tossing the caber, putting the stone, and other manly games and exercises which are peculiar to the north, and in all these competitions Macdonald proved the stern stuff of which he was made.

It soon became apparent to Mr. Mathie that the one absorbing thought in the mind of young Macdonald was that of becoming a soldier. He was always declaring that a soldier he would be, and that he would make his mark in the military world. He had some notion of joining the Royal Engineers, but Mr. Mathie suggested to him that it would be better to enlist into an infantry regiment, as the chances of promotion were better. Many times young Macdonald confided to his friend his conviction that the shop and the yard-stick were not for him, and his determination to take even the smallest steps towards gaining the object of his ambition.

In carrying out some of these ideas Hector at times made matters somewhat uncomfortable for Mr. Mathie, for, whether he possessed the gift of persuasion, or whether it was sheer force of will, the fact remains that many a morning at five o'clock he

had Mathie out of bed and made that gentleman, willy-nilly, give him his first lessons in drill. As this "soldiering" took place in the bedroom, and both "drill-sergeant" and "recruit" would most often be attired in their night garments only, it is easy to imagine how grotesque those first lessons must have been. So Mr. Mathie told the story in the interview referred to, and I have his written word for it that this is exactly how those drill lessons were given.

Later, Hector joined the Inverness Volunteers, the 1st V.B. Cameron Highlanders, and, according to old comrades now in Inverness, he threw himself heart and soul into the work. Things went on in this way for months, and Macdonald became proficient not only in the rudiments of drill, but in the manual and bayonet exercises. About this time Macdonald's people got to hear of his desire to get into the army, and one of Hector's brothers called on Mr. Mathie and had a serious talk with him about the matter, and Mr. Mathie, who had formed a great idea of the aptitude of his pupil for military exercises, did not hesitate to express the view that "Hector might do worse than go into the army."

While all this tuition in drill and kindred matters was going forward there was one man who was kept in entire ignorance of the military tendencies of his promising young apprentice. That gentleman was Mr. Mackay, his master, who has given the author this story of his discovery :—

"So far as I can remember," Mr. Mackay said, "he (Hector Macdonald) attended to his duties quite to my satisfaction. One morning in June, 1870, when he had been with me for nearly two years, on my coming to business, and on inquiry of my principal manager, I found that Hector had not put in an appearance, and I was told that he had enlisted in the army. I remarked: 'Well, I am sorry for this, for I liked Hector and thought a great deal of him;' and I added that 'he would only regret this once, and that would be for all his lifetime.'"

But, as Mr. Mackay himself rejoices to say, every one will agree that that prediction, happily, has not been fulfilled. Hector's old employer takes great pride in the progress which has been made by his former apprentice. It is interesting to know what the boy thought of the master, and in so doing to take a peep at the character of the future General. When, early in 1880, Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald was at Kabul, Afghanistan, waiting for the arrival of the commission which his gallant conduct had won for him, he wrote to Mr. Mackay, who, having retired from business, now lives at Gordonston, Inverness. The letter was dated Kabul, February 2, 1880. It was a long one, and in its opening passages Hector expressed the utmost contrition and begged his old master's forgiveness "for an act committed nearly ten years ago." That act was in getting drill lessons without his master's knowledge and enlisting without

his master's permission, thus breaking his apprenticeship agreement. Hector wrote: "I regret the duplicity I exhibited then, and the want of confidence in you—you who were always an indulgent—I fear too indulgent—always kind, and ever a cheerful and gentle master."

Hector, writing after that interval of ten years, uses very harsh language towards himself for not frankly telling his master that he wanted to be a soldier, and says that in the intervening years the thought of this and of the possible embarrassment to business which his sudden and unannounced departure might have occasioned had given him "many a pang of remorse." He adds:—

"Many a time have I been on the eve of writing you to ask your forgiveness for my delinquency, but I became faint-hearted and feared being snubbed, and, to tell the truth, I might not have had the courage to do so now had it not been for a cutting which I saw from a newspaper a few days since, in which it was stated that eight years ago I had served as an assistant at another draper's establishment. Now, I know (and you know from my signature) that I was in your establishment—Mr. William Mackay, Association Buildings, Inverness.

"Of course I have no wish, and your own good, strong and sound common-sense will lead you to see that no end or good can be had by contradicting the report. Nevertheless, it opened a way for me to

address you, for I felt not a little nettled—vain man—when being put down as Mr. ——'s production, whereas should any one be credited with knocking sense into a stupid head it should be you and you alone.

"Now you will please observe that any strides I made in my profession or any more I may make are due in a marked measure to the observance and initiation (so far as could be applied to a soldier's life) of your methodical and business-like manner of conducting your establishment; for I may add that what you taught—punctuality, order, cleanliness, method, and—here I fell with you and received a lesson—implicit faith and obedience, are the main attributes of a good soldier.

"I need not say what caused me quitting your employ, yet it may be a good turn to you to say—never let your employés lodge with soldiers or with those who were soldiers, for as sure as you do you may look out to losing some of them.

"I am, dear sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"HECTOR MACDONALD,

"Colour-Sergeant, 92nd Highlanders."

This copy, the original of which was before the author at the time of writing these extracts, shows Macdonald to be a keenly sensitive man, who frankly admits that he treated his master rather badly by leaving him so unceremoniously. It is a

tribute to his strong sense of what was right that he actually worried himself for ten years in consequence of his hasty departure from the draper's, and his mind was not at rest upon the subject till he had penned his interesting appeal for forgiveness. It is a trait which shows the fine qualities and sterling character of Hector Macdonald. The advice as to not letting employés lodge with soldiers has its distinctly humorous side. Mr. Mackay did his country, inadvertently, a great service by not acting upon the plan which Macdonald subsequently suggested to him in order to retain assistants.

Hector Macdonald has a memory and a heart. He has shown it on many occasions. He regards the old associations and the recollections of them as precious. It is interesting to note that, after the battle of Omdurman, Mr. Mathie, who had, under the unique circumstances which have been described, acted as drill instructor to Hector, read that the gallant soldier hailed from Inverness. He wrote to him asking if he were the same Hector Macdonald of the old days, and, if so, whether it would be too much to ask him to write. Shortly afterwards Mr. Mathie received the following letter from General Macdonald, and it need not be said that he is extremely proud not only of the brief epistle itself but of the kindly sentiments it expresses. The letter, a copy of which Mr. Mathie sent to me, is as follows :—

INVERGORDON CASTLE, ROSS-SHIRE, N.B.

"*May* 12, 1899.

"DEAR MATHIE,—I am the same Hector Macdonald, and you are not asking too much. Indeed, it is possible it may have been that it was the sight of you and your comrades that made me what I am.

"Yours sincerely,

"H. A. MACDONALD."

Later, Mr. Mathie received a present of a photograph of his old chum. Till the receipt of this letter Mr. Mathie had not heard of Hector Macdonald from the time when, in 1870, he left the tartan warehouse and enlisted in the 92nd Highlanders—the gallant Gordons.

CHAPTER IV

The gallant Gordon Highlanders—"Kissed into existence —"The Cock o' the North"—Egypt and the Peninsula —The Battle of Corunna—Duke of Wellington's appreciation—Vittoria—At Waterloo—Where the fight was hottest—The Crimea campaign—Services in India—Dargai—The joining of Hector Macdonald.

HECTOR MACDONALD became a soldier. He chose his own career. In his case, as in that of many young fellows who have decided to strike out for themselves in the field which most suited their inclinations, it was thought by many of his friends that he had made a mistake. But Hector Macdonald was right. It was his critics who were wrong. Having decided to make his way in the profession of arms, it is interesting to look at the particular branch of it wherein he served his military apprenticeship and made his first great steps up the ladder of fame.

Hector Macdonald joined the famous Gordon (92nd) Highlanders, than which no regiment has a more splendid record of great deeds done in battle.

Styled regimentally the 92nd Highlanders, it is as "The Gordons" that they are popularly known both to the army and to the public. There have always been a family of Gordons in Scotland. They have marked many a brilliant page of history, and have been notable especially in the district around Aberdeen for several centuries. Not least amongst their deeds is the establishment of this fine regiment. It was "kissed into existence" at the close of the eighteenth century by the then Duchess of Gordon (*née* Jane Maxwell), wife of the fourth duke. Of the Duke, Mr. James Milne, in his interesting book[1] about the regiment, remarks: "He was the 'Cock o' the North,' but perhaps the Duchess, with her romping spirit, not infrequently played the tune."

She was, indeed, a lady of much vivacity and strength of character. She played a dashing part and played it bravely and well. Her son, the Marquis of Huntly, had been in Flanders with the Duke of York, and coming home, decided to form a Gordon regiment from the family estates, and did it by his own energy, by the aid of his father, and the devotion of his mother. The Duchess sought everywhere for soldiers for the regiment, and she soon found a full complement of men. She sounded the name of Gordon up hill and down dale, she talked to the

[1] "The Gordon Highlanders: Being the story of these Bonnie Fighters." Told by James Milne. London: John Macqueen, 1898.

lowly youngsters of the district with all the power of a beautiful, fascinating woman of high estate. She did more. She kissed every man of them who promised to enlist. Small wonder that in a very few months she had a goodly selection of smart young fellows ready to dare and do anything for the name and fame of the Gordons. By the middle of the year 1794 the regiment was enrolled as the Gordon Highlanders, and the Marquis of Huntly commanded it.

In their early years the regiment served in Ireland, in Spain, Corsica, Elba, and in Holland. They had quiet times in the beginning of their career. Greater activity followed. They had a brush with the French at Egmont-op-Zee, where they gave proof of the mettle of which they were made, and scored their first victory.

Next they had a turn in Egypt and greatly distinguished themselves, and lessened their numbers. At Alexandria they played a conspicuous part, and considerably aided Sir Ralph Abercromby to defeat the French under Mensu on March 21, 1801. They engaged in the operations against Copenhagen, and in January, 1809, were performing valiant deeds in the Peninsula. The regiment took part in the battle of Corunna, where the British army, some 15,000 strong, under the command of Sir John Moore, was attacked by more than 20,000 French. They fought one of the hottest engagements of that severe conflict, and they won. The casualties

amongst the British troops were heavy in that engagement, but their enemy's loss was far greater. The British army gained a notable victory, and the Gordon Highlanders did their part in the winning of it. This was the battle in which Sir John Moore was killed, having been badly wounded by a shell. He died in the hour of victory.

The Gordons were at Torres Vedras in the following year, and throughout the Peninsular wars they maintained a distinguished reputation, engaging in many severe struggles, and earning by their deeds the warm eulogies of the Duke of Wellington.

At Almarez the Gordons did heroic deeds. They were at the great engagement of Vittoria. There the Duke of Wellington, on June 21, 1813, beat the French army commanded by Joseph Buonaparte, King of Spain, and Marshal Jourdan. The men engaged on either side were about 60,000. The battle raged long and furiously. The British won a magnificent victory, but they lost 500 officers and men killed, and nearly 3,000 wounded. And the Gordon Highlanders suffered severely. Marshal Jourdan lost all his guns and ammunition, and his marshal's baton to boot, and the Gordon Highlanders helped him to that loss. They were told at Maza, Mr. Milne relates, that the strain of their fine work had been so severe that they must be dead beat, and would not be able to take part in the charge. Weary they were with hard fighting, but

the Gordons went into the charge nevertheless, and into the front of it, and another British victory was won. The story of St. Pierre is a repetition of this. The Gordon Highlanders were very much in it, and success came again.

So the story runs on. Where the fight was hottest they desired to be, and they often had their desire fully satisfied. Wherever they fought they added honours to their name. Time after time in that memorable Peninsular campaign were the Gordon Highlanders as hard at work as any of the service, always fighting well and bravely, following one brilliant piece of work with another, and so on till the great day of Waterloo, in Belgium, when Wellington fought and finally defeated the great Napoleon.

In the Waterloo fight there were engaged on the one side the French army of 72,000 men and 246 guns, under Napoleon. The Duke of Wellington pitted against them nearly an equal number of the allied troops, of whom only 24,000 were British, and they only had 156 guns. The eve of the battle was remarkable for the historic ball given at Brussels by the Duchess of Richmond. This lady was the daughter of the Duchess of Gordon of the kisses, and Colonel Cameron, of the Gordon Highlanders, was one of those present at her ladyship's ball. That was on June 15, 1815. Quatre Bras came the next day. It was there, the French pressing hard, that Colonel Cameron sought permission from the Duke

of Wellington to move against the French line. The Duke's answer was striking. "Have patience," said he, "you'll have plenty of work by and by." Yes, have patience! The Duke knew well how keen for the fight those seasoned warriors were, and knew how well their work would be done when the time came to do it. At last they got the word to go, and the tartan line was at the French foe in a moment and the enemy was beaten back. But the brave commander Cameron was shot and died a few moments afterwards; not, however, till he had heard that the Gordon Highlanders had performed their task and knew that the day was theirs.

At Waterloo the Gordon Highlanders were on the left of the British line, and the regiment had been waiting for work whilst Napoleon was having his toughest struggle. At a critical moment in the fortunes of the day the Gordons had their longed-for orders. Galloping up to them Sir Denis Pack brought the order from the Duke, and he conveyed the message in these terms, "92nd, you must charge; the troops on your right and left have given way." What followed is thus briefly described by Mr. Milne in his book about the Gordons to which reference has already been made: "The whole field was a babel of tumult, shrouded in heavy clouds of smoke. Quietly the 92nd formed up; hurry, but no haste. They stood shoulder to shoulder—the old Gaelic saying 'Highlanders, shoulder to shoulder'—and

at the order advanced four deep. In front, a huge French column plumed itself, and at it, when a score of paces distant, the Highlanders let fly a withering volley. The musket of the early century was no magician's weapon, but at close quarters it wrought slaughter. Promptly the Gordons threw themselves upon the column, and with such an impact that they broke clean into it.

"The coming of the Highlanders had amazed, and in a degree shaken, the French column, which thus proved ill able to repel a bold attack. It was the driving of a small solid body into a loose mass. At the moment up clinked the Scots Greys; indeed, it had been a race between the horsemen and the Highlanders. In some instances the latter clung to the stirrup leathers of the former, the better to get deep into a fight which became a rout. 'Scotland for ever!' rose the cry at that perfect feat of arms, and we still hear it.

"'You have saved the day, Highlanders,' Sir Denis Pack declared, 'but you must return to your position—there is more work to be done.'"

The Gordons had indeed played a glorious part in the crushing and final defeat of Napoleon.

Peace followed, and the Gordons returned home, where they received the warm welcome they deserved. Subsequently they saw the end of the Crimean campaign. They took part in the Indian Mutiny, but here again they did not get the fighting they desired. Plenty was to come, however, and it

came with the Afghan War, to which the Gordon Highlanders went, and this time our hero was amongst them. How he distinguished himself in that campaign will be described in another chapter. Again our hero was with them at that dread Majuba day in South Africa in 1881. There most of them were killed or wounded, and some, including Hector Macdonald, had the terrible misfortune of being compelled to surrender—the hardest fate for a soldier to endure. This also will be the subject of a description in a later chapter. The 92nd subsequently absorbed the 75th and became the 2nd battalion Gordon Highlanders. They served with distinction in Egypt against Arabi, and they were the heroes of Dargai, which they took while their wounded pipers, including Findlater, played "The Cock o' the North." It was there that Colonel Mathias, on October 20, 1897, addressed them in a brief speech which shows the way the commanders of the Gordon Highlanders have always known the spirit of their men:

"Men of the Gordon Highlanders:

"The General has ordered that position to be taken at any cost.

"The Gordon Highlanders will take it!"

All the world knows how the famous regiment performed the task. It was of them that the late Sir William Lockhart remarked in connection with this great achievement, "When I gave orders for

the taking of Dargai by the Gordon Highlanders, it was said to me that I might as well attempt to take an army up into the clouds. Wherever Scotsmen go, however, we always manage to do very well."

CHAPTER V

A soldier in India—Severe work and steady progress—Private to corporal—Corporal to colour-sergeant—With the Prince of Wales at Lahore—Proclaiming "the Empress of India" at Delhi—Description of the scene—The officer and the new sergeant.

FOR several years the doings of Hector Macdonald called for no public notice. He was learning his soldier's duties, and learning them well. His was a strong character. He had gone into the army for serious work, and being there he earnestly persevered with it. He never shirked a duty, however trivial. Army duties were to be his business in life, and he took life as a very real thing. He made himself master of every detail of his work. Small wonder, therefore, that in later years, when he was a commander, his men were devoted to him. They knew that he understood them thoroughly, knew their strength and knew also their failings and weaknesses. He was one of themselves, and the sympathy that comes from mutual knowledge and understanding is a link of the greatest strength.

As a private Hector Macdonald was fortunate in joining so great a regiment, one in which the good qualities of the officers have been famous from the very first Colonel, the Marquis of Huntly, the man whose mother had kissed the Gordons into being. Macdonald was not only well treated, but he was well trained. After his enlistment at Inverness—a story which gained considerable currency to the effect that he tramped from Inverness and enlisted at Glasgow is incorrect—he had a really good time, according to his own account. There was no harshness, no rough words, no unpleasant tasks to perform. Enlisting—in Inverness at any rate—seems to have been a most pleasant business. Macdonald's own words will tell the story best. He has described the first scene (after taking the Queen's shilling) thus: "I was conducted with the greatest care and placed in a railway carriage, and given the most minute instructions how to proceed and how to arrive in Aberdeen. On arrival at Aberdeen I was met by a non-commissioned officer of the 92nd, and conducted to the Castlehill Barracks. And I say, from the commanding officer to the smallest drummer boy, I was treated exactly as if I had been a member, or, rather, as if I had been with my own family. Everything possible was done. I was shown what to do and how to do it; and from then until now I have never forgotten how much I owe to my old regiment."

Evidently there is no need to commiserate recruits

for the Gordon Highlanders in Inverness. Hector Macdonald started with a good deal in his favour. He was strong, keen for his soldier's work, bright, clear-headed, persevering, determined. He had that preliminary drill training which was of some use to him at the start. He soon learned the rest, and became thoroughly efficient. He says himself that his officers took the greatest pains with him as with other recruits. On one occasion he used these words: "I claim no merit to myself, but I claim that whatever success I have attained is entirely due to the training I received from my officers when I joined the 92nd Gordon Highlanders. Their kindness and sympathy to the young soldier is now a household word. They always entered into all the sports and pastimes of the young recruits, and not only did that, but even in the schoolroom they attended to see that they were taught those things they should know, so as to enable them to become good soldiers. Even in those far-off days there was the greatest consideration paid to the new recruit."

It is evident that the youngsters had a very good time indeed, and advantages which were by no means general even thirty years ago in the army. The reference to education is interesting. Fifty or sixty years ago it was considered an altogether unnecessary thing even for the officers in the army to have any education. When Macdonald enlisted he found that so far as the Gordons were concerned it seemed to be of the utmost importance for the

recruit to attend to the schoolmaster's training as well as to that of the sergeant-major. But the Gordons were, in many respects, an exceptional regiment.

Macdonald paid close attention to duty. He took his part in the fun and the frolic, in the games and sports as well as in the serious duty. He joined his regiment in India in 1871. He was speedily made a corporal, and rose steadily till, in 1879, he had reached the rank of colour-sergeant—a record of progress which was undoubtedly excellent. He won that advancement by his ability and behaviour. He was sober, steady, studious, hard-working. He attracted the favourable notice of his superiors by the thoroughness with which he performed all the tasks entrusted to him, by his general good conduct, his grasp of details, by his straightforwardness and smartness. They were qualities that should bring advancement in any walk of life; but some must go ahead more quickly than others, and Macdonald was one of those who went forward rapidly.

In the early days, in his first years of Indian life, he had plenty of hard work, and, on the way to it, it is worthy of mention that he had to pass through the Suez Canal, by that Egypt where, years afterwards, he was to be the hero of one of the most famous deeds a British officer ever accomplished. Arrived in India, he had eight years' severe work. Route marches under a burning Indian sun are not child's play. But, with it all, there were com-

pensations, for he was the witness of many famous scenes, notable in the history of India and of the Empire.

In the years 1875–76 the Prince of Wales paid his visit to India. During his progress through the Eastern Empire of the Queen, the Gordon Highlanders, Hector Macdonald amongst them, formed, at Lahore, the guard of honour to the Prince. Hector Macdonald was also present with his regiment at the notable "Imperial Assemblage" held at Delhi on January 1, 1877, when it was proclaimed to all subjects of the Queen in India that her Majesty had assumed the title of Empress of India. Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, invited to that assembly all governors, princes, chiefs, and nobles of India, and there was arranged one of the most magnificent ceremonials which even India has witnessed. Colonel (now Lord) Roberts was responsible for the military arrangements, and was a member of the committee which arranged the ceremonial. Hector Macdonald, as I have said, as one of the Gordon Highlanders, witnessed this ceremony, which is deserving of more than passing notice. Lord Roberts, in his book, "Forty-one Years in India," has given a graphic description of the scene :—

"The Chiefs and Princes were all settled in their several camps ready to meet the Viceroy, who, on his arrival, in a few graceful words, welcomed them to Delhi, and thanked them for responding to his

invitation. He then mounted, with Lady Lytton, on a state elephant, and a procession was formed, which, I fancy, was about the most gorgeous and picturesque which has ever been seen even in the East. The magnificence of the Native Princes' retinues can hardly be described; their elephant housings were of cloth of gold, or scarlet-and-blue cloths embroidered in gold and silver. The howdahs were veritable thrones of the precious metals, shaded by the most brilliant canopies, and the war-elephants belonging to some of the Central India and Rajputana Chiefs formed a very curious and interesting feature. Their tusks were tipped with steel; they wore shields on their foreheads, and breastplates of flashing steel; chain-mail armour hung down over their trunks and covered their backs and sides; and they were mounted by warriors clad in chain-mail, and armed to the teeth. Delhi must have witnessed many splendid pageants, when the Rajput, the Moghul, and the Mahratta dynasties, each in its turn, was at the height of its glory; but never before had Princes and Chiefs of every race and creed come from all parts of Hindustan, vying with each other as to the magnificence of their *entourage*, and met together with the same object—that of acknowledging and doing homage to one supreme Ruler.

"The next few days were spent by Lord Lytton in receiving the sixty-three Ruling Princes of India according to the strictest etiquette. Each Prince,

with his suite, was met at the entrance to the camp, and conducted up the street to the durbar tent by mounted officers, the salute to which he was entitled being fired while the procession moved on. He was then presented by the Foreign Secretary to the Viceroy, who placed him on a chair on his right, immediately below a full-length portrait of her Majesty. A satin banner, richly embroidered with the Chief's armorial bearings, surmounted by the Imperial crown, was next brought in by Highland soldiers, and planted in front of the throne, when the Viceroy, leading the particular Chief towards it, thus addressed him: 'I present Your Highness with this banner as a personal gift from her Majesty the Queen, in commemoration of her assumption of the title of Empress of India. Her Majesty trusts that it may never be unfurled without reminding you not only of the close union between the throne of England and your loyal and princely house, but also of the earnest desire of the paramount power to see your dynasty strong, prosperous, and permanent.'

"His Excellency then placed round the Chief's neck a crimson ribbon, to which was attached a very handsome gold medal, with the Queen's head engraved on it, adding: 'I further decorate you, by command of her Majesty. May this medal be long worn by yourself, and long kept as an heirloom in your family in remembrance of the auspicious date it bears.'

"The proclamation ceremony was most imposing,

and in every way successful. Three tented pavilions had been constructed on an open plain. The throne-pavilion in the centre was a very graceful erection, brilliant in hangings and banners of red, blue, and white satin, magnificently embroidered in gold, with appropriate emblems. It was hexagonal in shape, and rather more than 200 feet in circumference. In front of this was the pavilion for the Ruling Chiefs and high European officials, in the form of a semicircle 800 feet long. The canopy was of Star of India blue-and-white satin embroidered in gold, each pillar being surmounted by an Imperial crown. Behind the throne was the stand for the spectators, also in the form of a semicircle divided in the middle, and likewise canopied in brilliant colours. Between these two blocks was the entrance to the area.

"Each Chief and high official sat beneath his own banner, which was planted immediately behind his chair, and they were all mixed up as much as possible to avoid questions of precedence, the result being the most wonderful mass of colour, produced from the intermingling of British uniforms and plumes with gorgeous Eastern costumes, set off by a blaze of diamonds and other precious stones.

"The guests being all seated, a flourish of trumpets by the heralds exactly at noon announced the arrival of the Viceroy. His Excellency took his seat upon the throne, arrayed in his robes as Grand Master of the Star of India, the National Anthem

was played, the Guards of Honour presented arms, while the whole of the vast assemblage rose as one man. The Chief Herald was then commanded to read the Proclamation. A flourish of trumpets was again sounded, and her Majesty was proclaimed Empress of India."

Hector Macdonald has frequently declared that he will never forget the splendours of that unique ceremony. It is easy to believe that. In connection with his promotion to colour-sergeant, he once told the following story at one of the many banquets which were given in his honour in 1899, on his return after Omdurman. He was then, as every one knows, a colonel, and he said: "When I was about to be promoted to the rank of sergeant, the commanding officer called for me and said, 'Corporal Macdonald, I have no fault to find with you, and I am going to promote you to the rank of sergeant. Remember this, that a sergeant in the 92nd Highlanders is equal to a Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom.' I therefore felt it to be my duty to strive as much as I could to attain to something at least equal to a Member of Parliament."

Macdonald, soon after this promotion to colour-sergeant, was to have the opportunity, of which he availed himself to the full, of showing something of his metal in warfare. His chance came in Afghanistan, and the circumstances must form the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER VI

Troubles in Afghanistan—Shere Ali and the British—Murder of Major Cavagnari—General Roberts starts for Kabul—Gordon Highlanders to the front—An ambush—A hot engagement—Gallant Highland laddies—Hector Macdonald's bravery—Steps up the ladder of fame—The battle of Charasiab—General Roberts and "Fighting Mac."

MACDONALD aimed at great things, and his opportunity came with the Afghan war of 1879–80. In that memorable campaign the Gordon Highlanders, with whom he still served, played an important part. Troubles for this country in connection with Afghanistan had been no new thing. Dost Mohammed Khan became Ameer in 1826. He was dethroned by the British in 1838 and sent to Calcutta, Luja Shah being restored to supreme power in his stead. The occupation of Kabul by the British led to discontent and rebellion. Terrible events followed. British representatives were murdered, and in 1842, one of the most dire disasters ever experienced by the British arms had to be

recorded. The Gilzais in the Khyber Pass destroyed the British army consisting of nearly 4,000 soldiers and 12,000 camp followers. One Englishman, Dr. Brydone, and a few natives only escaped. This was, of course, followed by reprisals. Sir George Pollock re-established our broken prestige, Kabul was captured, and Dost Mohammed again became Ameer. Shere Ali in 1855 was Ameer, but, having many and ambitious brothers, two of whom by right of birth had better claims to the throne than he, the country was in a perpetual state of disturbance, and England, keenly appreciating the dangers to its Indian territories, continued to play the part of the careful watch-dog. Shere Ali received our protection, and in 1870 was given a subsidy. He received another three years afterwards. Yakoob Khan, son of Shere Ali, was troublesome, and occasionally rebelled against his father, who had our moral and material support.

In 1877 and 1878 the troubles began to thicken. Shere Ali had his subsidy withheld in consequence of his refusing the demand that he should receive a British resident. Further offence was given when he consented to receive, and did receive, General Stolietoff, a Russian envoy, and agreed that Russia should be the guardian of the Ameer's interests. This the British Government had no intention to permit, but Shere Ali was in the mood to be obstinate. An envoy, sent to the Ameer by the Viceroy, was given presents, and that was all. He

returned, and shortly afterwards Sir Neville R. Chamberlain, commander of the Madras army, was sent on a mission to the Ameer.

Major Cavagnari with an advance party was stopped in the Khyber Pass, and forced to retire. This was in September, 1878. This event, coupled with others which immediately followed, could have, under the circumstances, one result only. England meant to assert its power, considering that its interests and policy rendered that course essential. Three divisions of a British army were formed—one at Quettah, one at Peshawur, and the third at Kuram. The British were brilliantly successful, General Roberts overcoming many obstacles with that skill, courage, and dash which have characterised his operations throughout his career. The Afghans suffered defeat after defeat, their chief cities were occupied by our troops, General Stewart entered Kandahar unopposed on January 7, 1879, and on February 20th the death of Shere Ali was announced.

Events then speedily shaped for peace. Yakoob Khan, son of Shere Ali, was recognised by the British as Ameer on May 9th, and a treaty of peace was signed at Gandamak on May 26th. By this it was agreed that the British should occupy the Khyber Pass, the Kuram and Pisheen valleys, and that they should have their resident at Kabul. The Russian representative at Kabul had previously been withdrawn. In return for these concessions the

English Government agreed to pay Yakoob Khan the handsome subsidy of £60,000 a year.

This arrangement seemed to promise very well. It was Afghan treachery that led to the fair horizon being covered with black clouds. Those clouds were dispelled, after many days, by the brilliant feats of arms which made the greatness of "Bobs," and which furthered the careers of many fine British officers who are to-day fighting again for the honour of the flag under the same General Roberts. And a humble colour-sergeant, Hector Macdonald, was one of the men who, through fire and sword, was to make further progress on the way to fortune and to fame.

General Roberts gave up the command of the Kuram Field Force and went to Simla. Just before he had said goodbye to Major Sir Louis Cavagnari, Envoy and Plenipotentiary to the Ameer of Kabul. It was goodbye for ever, for Cavagnari was going to his grave. He reached Kabul on July 24th, and was cheerful about his mission. He sent messages, indicating that things were going well. The last one received from him, on September 2nd, was to that effect. The next day the Residency was attacked, and he and those with him were murdered. The news of the occurrence caused the gravest concern. The immediate result was that General Roberts was ordered to resume his Kuram command, and he formed the Kabul Field Force. Of this the 1st Infantry Brigade included

the 92nd Highlanders, Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Parker in command, and Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald with them. Some correspondence between the Ameer and General Roberts, which the latter considered unsatisfactory, followed. General Roberts then started for Kushi.

General Sir Frederick Roberts had with him a portion of the Cavalry Brigade, a squadron of Lancers, and some detachments of the Punjab Cavalry. They had not been long on the way before fighting began. General Roberts was pushing on with the cavalry when he was met by a few of the Gordon Highlanders, who brought to the General a communication from Colonel Perkins, of the Royal Engineers, who was in command on the Shutargardan. The communication was a warning. It intimated that attack was to be expected, and was probably imminent. Pushing on, General Roberts found in a very narrow portion of the defile that his further advance was to be disputed by a force of Afghans over 2,000 in number. A very unpleasant ambush had been carefully prepared, but it is not the way of General Roberts to be caught napping. A hot fire was opened on the British force from a body of Afghans, who were perfectly concealed by the natural cover provided by the wild and rocky character of the pass. The volley was a surprise. Dr. Townsend, chief medical officer, who was riding near the General, was severely wounded. General

Roberts was engaged in conversation with Townsend when the bullets came whistling about their ears, finding billets in the bodies of some of the force. General Roberts was one of the lucky ones; he was not hit. Cavalry were no use to deal with this interruption. It was a task for the infantry, and the Highlanders, together with a body of dismounted cavalry, were ordered to clear the way. They dashed at the enemy. The engagement was, however, continued for a considerable time, and it was not until the main body of the escort had arrived to aid the advance-guard that the Afghans were dispersed.

It was not only at this point, however, that fighting was proceeding. Further in front a portion of the Gordon Highlanders, Hector Macdonald with them, was having a hand-to-hand conflict with another body of Afghans. They were greatly outnumbered, and the enemy were fine fellows in splendid condition, with full confidence that they could soon wipe out the little force of Highland laddies whom they had taken unawares. They did not know those Highlanders. They were soon to learn. It looked as if the Highlanders had been hopelessly surprised. But few places, however tight, are hopeless when Highland soldiers are found in it; fewer still when Hector Macdonald is with the men. This was Hector's first brush with the enemy in this campaign. Moreover, he was in command of the little detachment. It was "At them, Gordons!"

and, when General Roberts came out from his engagement and reached the higher portion of the gorge, it was to see the Afghans flying before the gallant Gordon Highlanders and the equally brave and gallant 3rd Sikhs. Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald was leading the Scotchmen; Jemadar Sher Mohammed was at the head of the Sikhs. So complete was the success, so valiant the achievement, that General Roberts was greatly impressed by the skill and valour displayed, and later, writing of the engagement, said: "The manner in which the colour-sergeant and the native officer handled their men gave me a high opinion of both. The energy and skill with which this party was handled reflected the highest credit on Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald, 92nd Highlanders, and Jemadar Sher Mohammed, 3rd Sikhs. But for their excellent services on this occasion it might probably have been impossible to carry out the programme of the march."

It was a difficult piece of work, well and bravely done, showing the capacity of Hector Macdonald to act on an emergency on his own initiative. For "Fighting Mac" it was the first step up the ladder of fame. And it had been witnessed and appreciated by that keenest of military judges who is at the present time Commander-in-Chief of her Majesty's forces in South Africa.

On the following day General Roberts, proceeding without further interruption, reached Kushi, and

there met the Ameer, whom he retained in his camp as a guest during the further advance. The army pushed onwards, and on October 5th the village of Charasiab was reached. The way was difficult. Mountain gorges of a wild and tortuous character had to be negotiated. There was a rest by the peaceful village of Charasiab, and next morning, October 6th, one of the worst gorges in the district blocked the way. It was reported by the scouts to be impassable. The Gordon Highlanders, with some Lancers, Punjab Cavalry, pioneers, rifles and guns, were sent to clear it. This order was given just before daybreak. But, the party having started, and the light coming clear, General Roberts discovered that he was in a fix. The whole of the surrounding hills were swarming with Afghans, and an important section of his force was far in the rear. The enemy were four or five times as strong as the 4,000 men General Roberts had with him, and they were well armed and supported by artillery which they knew well how to use with effect.

To the north of the village of Charasiab there rises a semicircular range of hills, cleft by a rugged and narrow pass, called Sang-i-Nawishta. It was this pass that the party, which included the Gordon Highlanders, had been sent to clear. The whole of Roberts's little army was eager for the fray. They were a splendid body of men, full of ardour, anxious for vengeance for the cruel massacre of Cavagnari and his men. Major White (now General Sir

George White, the hero of the Ladysmith siege) was in command of the Gordons. They were ordered to threaten the Sang-i-Nawishta, and to prevent the enemy from occupying the Charasiab village.

The battle was long and fierce. Whether it were in the open, or in the almost impregnable gorges, the Afghans, brave and fearless people, fought with the utmost tenacity, and they had the advantage of greatly outnumbering the attacking British. A succession of peaks held by the enemy on the extreme right was regarded as the key to the position, and it was determined to clear them of Afghans at any cost. Another detachment of Highlanders, belonging to the 72nd, was sent to do it. Gallantly they fought their way up, and being joined by Gurkhas, and under cover of artillery, they cleared point after point and then made their chief frontal attack. But the nature of the ground which they were forcing the enemy from was of the most difficult character, and even the Highlanders were compelled to pause. Reinforcements were sent to this position, towards which the clever Afghan commander had been hurrying fresh bodies of men. At last the final British dash at the position was made. The Highlanders and the Gurkhas came on with a cheer; the Afghans' line wavered and gave way. In this success a young Irish private in the 72nd Highlanders, a man named Macmahon, greatly distinguished himself and was

awarded the Victoria Cross. His was only one of many gallant deeds that day.

Hot as this engagement had been it was only the preliminary to the general advance which was immediately ordered. The Highlanders, Gurkhas, and Punjab Infantry attacked the Afghans' main position. The courageous enemy fought hard and well. The force under Lieutenant-Colonel Fitz-Hugh was driven over the crest of a hill after suffering heavily. The Gordon Highlanders here came to the rescue. They had been engaged under Major White above the Sang-i-Nawishta Pass, and, having beaten the Afghans back, Major White was able to send two companies of the 92nd Highlanders to Lieutenant-Colonel Fitz-Hugh's assistance. What was troubling the British force most was that the Afghans were holding some very strong advanced posts directly in front of the gorge, and the holding of these for a time prevented our force from getting their guns to bear upon the enemy's position. The order was given to take those advanced posts, and the 92nd Highlanders, under Captain Cotton, went and took them. Hector Macdonald was with the detachment. In face of a galling fire they stormed the hill and captured it by a brilliant charge. Then the guns were brought up. The whole of the main ridge was shortly afterwards captured; Major White early in the afternoon had gained possession of the pass and of twelve Afghan guns as well. When this had

been accomplished further resistance was not long offered by the remainder of the Afghan force. Major White won his Victoria Cross in this battle. In his description of the engagement in "Forty-one Years in India," Lord Roberts concludes: "They rapidly abandoned the height, and retired across the river toward the north-east, pursued by the small body of cavalry attached to White's force, under Major Hammond, and a party of the 92nd, under Major Hay.

"Baker now paused to allow of the infantry's ammunition being replenished, and then advanced along the ridge towards the pass, which he reached in time to help the cavalry who were engaged with the enemy's rear-guard at the river; the latter were driven off and forced to retreat; but by this time the growing darkness made further pursuit impossible. We were therefore compelled to rest satisfied with holding the ground in advance by piquets and occupying both ends of the Sang-i-Nawishta defile, where the troops bivouacked for the night. I was able to supply them with food from Charasiab, and they were made as comfortable as they could be under the circumstances.

"While the fighting was taking place on the heights in front of Charasiab, the hills on both flanks of my camp were crowded with the enemy, anxiously watching the result; they did not approach within the cavalry patrols, but one party caused so much annoyance to a piquet by firing

into it that it became necessary to dislodge it, a service which was performed in a very daring manner by a few of the 92nd, under Lieutenant Grant and Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald, the same non-commissioned officer who had a few days before so distinguished himself in the Hazardarakht defile.

"Our casualties were wonderfully few, only 18 killed and 70 wounded, while the enemy left 300 dead behind them, and as they succeeded in carrying numbers of their killed and wounded off the field, their loss must have been heavy."

Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald had twice in the course of a few days so distinguished himself that his fighting qualities, his valour, and his skill had specially attracted the attention of General Roberts, who was himself winning further laurels by the ability with which this Afghan campaign was conducted.

CHAPTER VII

Avenging Cavagnari—The Mad Priest's work—Ayoob Khan's Advance on Kandahar—The Maiwand operations—A British disaster—How it was to be retrieved—The British General's plan.

HAVING defeated the Afghans at the very important engagement of Charasiab, General Roberts continued his march to Kabul, which he entered about a month after leaving Simla, the march having been rapid and the successes gained important. Consequently he entered Kabul as a conqueror. Arrived there, a public proclamation was made by the General, explaining why a British army was there and also what were the intentions of the British Government. The murderers of Cavagnari were to be punished—punishment "swift, stern, and impressive." The meting out of the punishment occupied some time, and October and November passed in seeing to this matter, in maintaining order in the district, and in making arrangements for the winter quarters of the troops. The story of the Afghan campaigns has been a

repetition of earlier troubles. Victories might be won and apparently troubles would be settled or be on a fair way to settlement, while all the time fresh and more serious difficulties were brewing. While the English General was quietly proceeding with his pacification work a mad priest, Mushk-i-Alam, was rousing the hillmen of Afghanistan to "a holy war" to "rid the country of the Christian invaders." And as the Ameer overlooked such matters as the employment and pay of his troops, there were a lot of the Afghan regulars who were without occupation and just in the mood for an onslaught. At the beginning of December, General Roberts concentrated his forces in the Sherpur cantonments. Troubles became more serious. Sirdar Mahomed Hussain Khan was murdered in Maidan, and the attitude of Afghan leaders caused grave anxiety. Various brushes with the enemy took place. They were several of them of an indecisive character. On December 23rd an army of 25,000 men was defeated by General Roberts and General Gough near the Sherpur cantonments. In that battle the Afghans lost heavily. A few days after the enemy left Kabul, which was again occupied by the British.

It was now rumoured that Ayoob Khan had made up his mind to advance on Kandahar. In the middle of June, Ayoob Khan advanced, having with him a considerable force of men, and it was necessary that his movement should be checked.

Brigadier-General Burrows was set this difficult task—difficult because of the strength and situation of the enemy and the weakness of the forces which General Burrows had at his disposal. General Burrows had with him about 2,300 men, while Ayoob had an army of about 13,000, including a large body of cavalry. General Burrows determined to fall back to Khusk-i-Nakhud, between forty and fifty miles from Kandahar, where he would have a fairly good defensive position and where there was a sufficiency of food supplies. In the middle of July he received instructions authorising him to attack Ayoob, and the importance of defeating and dispersing Ayoob's forces was urged. It was recognised at the time that General Burrows had a very small force with him, and that his task was serious, if not desperate. It was made evident that Ayoob was aware of the comparative weakness of General Burrows' command, and Ayoob meant to turn his position if he could by the Maiwand Pass. The enemy were in possession of Maiwand and Garmao, and Ayoob intended to bring his entire army there with, it was thought, the intention to go through the Maiwand Pass and so to get to the rear of General Burrows' force. It was decided that the British division should move to Maiwand, which it was hoped would be reached before the army under Ayoob would be there in force.

With a total force of just under 2,500 General

Burrows started on July 27th for the twelve-mile march to Maiwand. He, unfortunately, started a few hours too late, and Ayoob reached Maiwand before he did. While on the way the British General received information of this, but he determined to push on, notwithstanding that there was good reason to believe that Ayoob's army had been largely reinforced, and numbered probably from 20,000 to 25,000 men. The small British force marched on rapidly. Mundabad, a small village about three miles from Maiwand, was safely reached. But the enemy were then very near. A good defensive position might have been taken up at Mundabad, but, ignorant of the closeness of Ayoob's force, General Burrows pushed rapidly on to disaster. He had become convinced that his best course was to go straight on, and he suffered through insufficient information as to the force and disposition of the enemy. The country, like all cultivated parts of Southern Afghanistan away from river-beds, is a wide gravelly slope, slightly undulating and rising toward the foot of the hills. Every mile or so were villages surrounded by an inner ring of walled gardens and an outer of cornfields, from which the crops, cut a month before, had not been removed. The pace of the march, necessarily regulated by the camels, was slow, and it was not till nearly 11 a.m. that the force came in sight of the village of Maiwand, hardly visible, though not much more than two miles off, through

the thick haze that generally veils the Afghan landscape throughout the long summer days. About the same time a large body of cavalry was seen far away on the left, and two guns and a troop of cavalry went out to reconnoitre. After a mile gallop they got within range and opened fire, and then a long, dark line gradually came into sight through the haze and made it apparent that the force had the whole of the Herat army before it, seemingly on its way also to Maiwand like ourselves.

The position that was then taken up by the force under General Burrows has been described by critics who were present as unwise, unsafe, and calculated to bring about a serious reverse. Mr. Archibald Forbes, the famous war correspondent, in his book, "The Afghan Wars," says: "The cavalry was in the rear, engaged in efforts to prevent the Afghans from taking the British infantry in reverse. The position was radically faulty, and indeed invited disaster. Both flanks were *en l'air* in face of an enemy of greatly superior strength; almost from the first every rifle was in the fighting line, and the sole reserve consisted of the two cavalry regiments. The baggage had followed the brigade across the ravine, and was halted about 1,000 yards in rear of the right, inadequately guarded by cavalry detachments. For half an hour no reply was made to the British shell fire, and an offensive movement at this time might have resulted

in success. But presently battery after battery was brought into action by the Afghans, until, half an hour after noon, the fire of thirty guns was concentrated on the brigade. Under cover of this artillery fire the ghazees from the ravine charged forward to within 500 yards of the 66th, but the rifle fire of the British regiment drove them back with heavy loss, and they recoiled as far as the ravine, whence they maintained a desultory fire. The enemy's artillery fire was well sustained and effective; the infantry found some protection from it in lying down, but the artillery and cavalry remained exposed, and suffered severely. An artillery duel was maintained for two hours, greatly to the disadvantage of the brigade, which had but twelve guns in action against thirty well-served Afghan pieces. The prostrate infantry had escaped serious punishment, but by 2 p.m. the cavalry had lost 14 per cent. of the men in the front line and 149 horses; the Afghan horsemen had turned both flanks, and the brigade was all but surrounded, while a separate attack was being made on the baggage. Heat and want of water were telling heavily on the sepoys, who were further demoralised by the Afghan artillery fire."

The spirit of demoralisation in a fighting force, once it has taken strong hold, grows apace. Gallant stands were made in this almost hopeless contest, but nothing could stop the feeling of defeat in the sepoy ranks, and they were mowed down whole-

sale. A cavalry charge, ordered to attempt the recovery of some of our captured guns, was a fiasco. The sepoys took to flight and would not be rallied. The result was a terrible defeat and terrible British losses. How great was the disaster is sufficiently shown by the official list of casualties. The whole British force engaged numbered 2,476 men. The casualties were 1,109. Of these 20 British officers were killed and 9 wounded or missing. Of the British rank and file 290 were killed and 48 wounded or missing. Of our native force 624 were killed and 118 were either wounded or missing. So that of these 1,109 casualties there were 934 killed—a truly appalling list. The remnant of our force, including General Burrows, reached Kandahar the same night.

No wonder the news caused consternation. British forces are not accustomed to such disaster as this. When General Roberts received the news he consulted Sir Donald Stewart, and with his sanction sent off the following message:—

"*To* MAJOR-GENERAL GREAVES, ADJUTANT-GENERAL IN INDIA, SIMLA.

"KABUL, *July* 30, 1880.

"Personal and secret. I strongly recommend that a force be sent from this to Kandahar. Stewart has organised a very complete one consisting of nine regiments of infantry, three of cavalry, and

three mountain batteries. This will suffice to overcome all opposition *en route*; it will have the best possible effect on the country, and will be ready to go anywhere on reaching Kandahar, being fully equipped in all respects. He proposes sending me in command.

"I am sure that but few Bombay regiments are able to cope with Afghans, and once the Kabul Field Force leaves this country, the chance of sending a thoroughly reliable and well-equipped column will be lost. The movement of the remainder of the Kabul troops towards India should be simultaneous with the advance of my division towards Kandahar, it being most desirable to limit the area of our responsibilities as soon as possible; at the same time, it is imperative that we should now show our strength throughout Afghanistan. The withdrawal, under existing circumstances, of the whole force from Kabul to India would certainly be misunderstood, both in Afghanistan and elsewhere. You need have no fears about my division. It can take care of itself, and will reach Kandahar under the month. I will answer for the loyalty and good feeling of the native portion, and would propose to inform them that, as soon as matters have been satisfactorily settled at Kandahar, they will be sent straight back to India. Show this to Lyall."

Lord Ripon, who was then Viceroy of India, authorised the expedition to Kandahar, and General

Roberts immediately set about the formation of his column for one of the most remarkable marches ever undertaken by a British commander. He chose a force of about 10,000 men of all ranks, with eighteen guns and over 8,000 camp followers. The force included the Gordon Highlanders, who had been having a large amount of serious work in connection with the Maiwand operations, and in the doing of which Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald was adding greatly to his knowledge and experience of serious fighting and difficult military organisation. Both the Highland regiments—the gallant 72nd and 92nd—were chosen to go with this force, and though their work had been of the most arduous description for some months, they had received strong drafts, and were described as being in the best condition and determined to go with "Bobs" on this notable march. It is indeed interesting to note how, through this great Afghan campaign, wherever the hardest work and the toughest fighting was to be done there was General Roberts in command, and there, in his humble capacity, treading the same hard ways, was Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald doing his share of the work with his splendid Highland comrades. The gay and gallant Gordons were in most of the tight places during this two years' terrible work in Afghanistan. Hector Macdonald, now a seasoned soldier, was having enough fighting and hard work to satisfy even his voracious military appetite.

CHAPTER VIII

The great march from Kabul—Difficulties of the route—In sight of the enemy—The battle of Kandahar — Hector Macdonald's work—From Sergeant to Lieutenant.

WITHIN a few days of receiving the Viceroy's authorisation for the march to Kandahar General Roberts had everything in readiness. The distance to be travelled was 320 miles, and the manner in which that march was accomplished has never been surpassed. The whole distance was covered in twenty-one days. They were going to the relief of Kandahar, and it was wondered if they could get there in time. Ayoob Khan was known to have a strong force, and when met there would be serious work indeed for this little British army of 10,000 men. Moreover, once the march was started, that army was cut off from communication with the outside world until such time as its work had been accomplished. No wonder then that, once the move was commenced, news of its progress was awaited with feverish anxiety.

The difficulties on the way were many, but

happily corn was abundant. The horses, therefore, were well kept. As to the men, it was no easy task to get them food, though the commissariat and transport arrangements which had been made were excellent. Fuel was hard to procure, and to get it it was a common thing to pull down houses (which General Roberts was careful to purchase and pay for) in order to get the wood out of them to light the camp-fires. Other conditions of the march were unpleasant in the extreme: choking dust was everywhere; the scorching sun burnt down upon men and horses; shade there was none. An occasional ravine with a bank of clay would now and then be found, and men sat upright against such banks to secure an atom of shelter. The thirst of the men and horses was terrible. But on and on they marched, almost unceasingly. Of some of the minor worries, General Roberts wrote:—

"One of the most troublesome duties of the rear-guard was to prevent the followers from lagging behind, for it was certain death for any one who strayed from the shelter of the column; numbers of Afghans always hovered about on the look-out for plunder, or in the hope of being able to send a Kafir, or an almost equally detested Hindu, to eternal perdition. Towards the end of the march particularly this duty became most irksome, for the wretched followers were so weary and footsore that they hid themselves in ravines, making up their

minds to die, and entreating, when discovered and urged to make an effort, to be left where they were. Every baggage animal that could possibly be spared was used to carry the worn-out followers; but notwithstanding this and the care taken by officers and men that none should be left behind, twenty of these poor creatures were lost, besides four native soldiers."

Ghazni, ninety-eight miles from the starting-point, was reached on August 15th. Here possession of the fortress was taken, and good supplies of food, forage, and water, obtained. Khelat-i-Ghilzai, eighty-eight miles from Kandahar, was reached on the 23rd.

The garrison at Khelat-i-Ghilzai was added to General Roberts' force, and the advance was resumed. Jir Andaz was reached on the following day, and here the news was received that, hearing of the British advance, Ayoob Khan had retired from the investment of Kandahar, and had proceeded a short distance to the north. On went the column, and how great the task was can be to some slight extent realised when it is stated that they provisioned themselves as they went, and had to supply the needs of a total of 18,000 men (including the camp followers) and over 11,000 animals. Every single day 4,000 lbs. of meat and 4,000 lbs. of vegetables were required, and also, amongst other things, 600 lbs. of sugar, 150 lbs. of tea, and nearly 6,000 lbs. of grain. Shahr-i-Safa was reached on August 27,

and there General Roberts received a letter from Colonel St. John at Kandahar, who informed him that Ayoob had with him a force of 4,000 infantry regulars, six 12-pounders, and two 9-pounders, four 6-pounder smooth-bore batteries, a 4-pounder battery, 2,000 sowars, and 4,000 ghazees. On the 27th two cavalry regiments under General Hugh Gough were sent on to Robat, and the same afternoon Colonel St. John rode out from Kandahar to Robat, bringing the news that Ayoob was rapidly strengthening his position in the Urgundab valley. The whole of General Roberts' force was at Robat on the 28th, and here it may be said the great march ended. The army was now within easy reach of Kandahar, and a day was taken at Robat for rest and recuperation. If ever men needed it those men were the army of General Roberts.

From Kabul to Robat the distance travelled had been 303 miles, and this had been done in twenty days. It was a march unequalled in the annals of the British army, and it exhibited a mobile strength the necessity of which has been so greatly emphasised in recent operations in South Africa. It is true that on the march General Roberts had encountered no opposition—a fact largely due to the punishment which had been inflicted on the tribesmen by Sir Donald Stewart, whose death has just (March 26, 1900) been announced. But, though no opposition was experienced, there was always the possibility of it, and the march had to be proceeded with while

the force was ever kept in readiness for any attack which might be made upon it. It was a march undertaken under circumstances of grave importance for England, for the Maiwand disaster was fresh in the memory of all, and the tribesmen were becoming bolder. General Roberts was supposed to be running on almost certain death. It was the rapidity of the movement and the skill and completeness of the arrangements that made success possible. The personal qualities of the force was a factor without which success would not have been possible. The short service system was then unknown. All the men were seasoned soldiers. General Roberts afterwards pointed out that the casualties which occurred on the march were mainly amongst the young soldiers. He noted specially that, of the 92nd Highlanders, with whom marched Hector Macdonald, the average service of the sergeants was fifteen years; of corporals eleven years; and of privates nine years. He added in comment afterwards: "It will be impossible for a British force ever again to perform such a march as those magnificent troops I had the honour and pride to command from Kabul to Kandahar. No commander would venture to undertake such a service except with soldiers on whose discipline, spirit, and endurance he could thoroughly rely. I never for a moment had a doubt as to the result; but then I had tried men, not untried and untrained boys, to depend upon."

So terrible was the work of that march that even General Roberts was for four days laid up with fever. But the march proceeded nevertheless, the General being carried on a litter. Of the whole force who were engaged in this great achievement the Gordon Highlanders had as light a list of casualties as any. That was owing to the splendid physique of the men, and Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald was almost as "fit" at the finish as at the start.

On the 30th the force encamped at Mo'mund, and from there General Roberts telegraphed, "I propose to encamp the infantry to the west of Kandahar immediately under the walls, and the cavalry under the walls to the south. Should I hear that Ayoob contemplates flight, I shall attack without delay. If, on the contrary, he intends to resist, I shall take my own time. The country he is occupying is, from description and map, extremely difficult and easily defensible, and each separate advance will require careful study and reconnaissance to prevent unnecessary loss of life."

Kandahar was reached somewhat earlier even than General Roberts had anticipated, and by that time the General had somewhat recovered from the fever which had prostrated him for several days. The column was halted for a few hours outside the city walls on the south. Here rest and refreshment were taken, and there was great thanksgiving for the safe arrival. It had been an anxious time, and the anxiety in the outside world had been intense. Mr.

Archibald Forbes, the brilliant journalist just deceased, who worked so splendidly for the London daily newspaper to the staff of which the author has the honour to belong, in his story of the second Afghan war, wrote of this period: "The days passed and there came no news of Roberts, and of the 10,000 men with whom the wise, daring little chief had cut loose from any base, and struck for his goal through a region of ill-repute and fanaticism and bitter hostility. The pessimists among us held him to be rushing on his ruin. But Roberts marched light; he lived on what the country supplied; he gave the tribesmen no time to concentrate against him; and two days in advance of the time he had set himself he reached Kandahar at the head of a force in full freshness of vigour and burning with zeal for immediate battle."

General Roberts was able to ride into Kandahar, and assumed command of the troops in Southern Afghanistan. The force camped to the west of the city, where the city was protected and plenty of good water procurable. Ayoob's camp was near. Battle was not long delayed. Shots were being exchanged a few hours after the British force took possession of their camping-ground. Several of the surrounding heights were occupied, and these were within range of the enemy's artillery on the Baba Wali Kotal. This was so strong a position that General Roberts came to the conclusion not to attack it directly. He had convinced himself that

to do so would mean a heavy loss of life, and this, as always, he was anxious to avoid, if possible. Ayoob Khan was encamped near the village of Mazra, and with a good supply of artillery and a position strongly defended by entrenchments he was practically safe from any direct attack from Kandahar. A turning movement was what he was afraid of. On August 31st General Roberts ordered a reconnaissance under General Gough and Colonel Chapman. They penetrated as far as the village of Pir Paimal, and found that it was strongly entrenched, and where also there was a strong battery. This movement led to a minor engagement. The enemy seemed to conclude that the reconnaissance was an advance in force and attacked. The British of course retired, losing some men in doing so. The reconnaissance was, however, a complete success, inasmuch as the information which was wanted was secured, and on the following morning, September 1st, the attack was made. The plan was explained to the commanding officers. It was to seriously threaten the enemy's left, the Baba Wali Kotal, with infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Meanwhile the 1st and 2nd Brigades were to turn the Pir Paimal position, and carry ultimately the enemy's camp at Mazra.

It was quite clear that the enemy were fully assured that their position was a strong one, and they early began offensive movements. They occupied the villages of Gundigau and Gundi

Mulla Sahibdâb. A preliminary feint having been made by the troops under General Primrose, the order was given by General Roberts for the main attack to be made by Major-General Ross, General Macgregor's 3rd Brigade being held in reserve. What General Ross had to do was to capture Gundi Mulla Sahibdab, and drive the enemy from the Pir Paimal. Brigadier-General Macpherson's brigade was entrusted with this duty, and in his first line were the 92nd Highlanders and the 2nd Goorkhas.

So, with the Gordon Highlanders leading the attack, the advance was made. Covered by the fire of the artillery, which compelled the strong Afghan force in the village to lie close, the Gordon Highlanders and the Goorkhas succeeded in getting near the village without serious opposition. Lieutenant-Colonel G. Parker commanded the Gordon Highlanders, Major G. White and Hector Macdonald being with him. The Goorkhas and the Highlanders engaged in friendly rivalry as to who should be first in the race for victory. It was a contest between them as to who should reach the village first. And now the village was near, and it was fix bayonets and charge. At the enemy the gallant Highlanders and Goorkhas went, and at the point of the bayonet, after a hard fight, they carried the position and the enemy fled. Arrived in the village, however, the troops found themselves in a very tight place, for from the houses and cellars while

the English were clearing the streets a murderous fire was poured on the soldiers from the ghazees who filled the houses and who threw their lives away with a recklessness that could only have been born of the teachings of some of the fanatical priests who had been rousing the hillmen to endeavour to turn the British out of the country. In one part of the place the Highlanders entered a channel enfiladed by a loopholed wall, from behind which they encountered an extremely hot fire. Sergeant Hector Macdonald, with a few of his men behind him, looking almost certain death in the face, rushed at the wall, thrust their own arms through the loopholes, and fired into the enclosure. It was one of the most daring deeds of an engagement that was marked by heroic conduct in every direction. Soon the 92nd Highlanders and the Goorkhas joined hands with the men of the 2nd Brigade, the 72nd Highlanders and the 2nd Sikhs, who had been as warmly engaged as their brethren-in-arms.

Having joined forces, these two brigades pressed on, fighting every step, giving charge after charge with the bayonet to carry positions on their way, and so they arrived at the point of the hill close to Pir Paimal, and wheeling to the right pressed on and on as rapidly as they could advance. They swept the enemy from all their positions in this direction, and by noon the whole of the Pir Paimal had been captured.

This was, however, only the first portion of the task. The turning movement had still to be carried out round the extremity of the Pir Paimal ridge. General Ross, without waiting to be reinforced, followed up the enemy at once, giving them no time to pause and rally. Macpherson's brigade, though the series of fierce charges in which they had engaged in taking the village had caused considerable losses and had fatigued the whole force, rushed on eagerly, and reached a strongly entrenched position at the other side of the Baba Wali Kotal. Here the Afghans had determined to make a great stand. They were in force about 8,000, and many ghazees were attacking the flanks and heavy artillery fire was poured into the brigade from two directions. Major White commanded the advance of the 92nd, and he found himself face to face with this great force. Reinforcements were hurrying up to the Afghan position from the Mazra camp of Ayoob. The Afghan guns on the Kotal, well manned and aimed, were removed so that their fire should be on the British, as well as the guns of the other Afghan batteries. Here was the fight of the day, and General Roberts, ever observant, was keenly watching the position. It was a moment for immediate action. Macpherson saw the reinforcements on their way to him, but he determined not to stop. The position should be stormed, and the gallant Gordon Highlanders and the equally gallant Goorkhas should lead the way. The order to

charge was given, and on went the Highlanders, the Goorkhas, and the 23rd Pioneers. The Highlanders had been sheltering themselves in a watercourse from the severe fire of the Afghan batteries and the Afghan riflemen on the Pir Paimal slopes. With a cross-fire upon them the Highlanders rushed out, Major White shouting, "One more charge, men, to close the business." With Major White leading, and Sergeant Hector Macdonald close to him, with bayonets fixed, and with the brave Goorkhas in line with them, the Highlanders drove the enemy from their entrenchments and sent them flying towards the Mazra camp. So keen was the rivalry between the Gordons and the Goorkhas for first honours that General Roberts records in "Forty-one Years in India":—

"Major White was the first to reach the guns, being closely followed by Sepoy Inderbir Lama, who, placing his rifle upon one of them, exclaimed, 'Captured in the name of the 2nd (Prince of Wales' Own) Goorkhas!'

"Whilst the 1st Brigade was advancing towards the last position, a half-battalion of the 3rd Sikhs (belonging to the 2nd Brigade), under Lieutenant-Colonel G. Money, charged a body of Afghans and captured three guns.

"The enemy were now absolutely routed, but, owing to the nature of the ground, it was impossible for General Ross to realise how complete had been his victory, and he fully expected that the enemy would

take up a fresh position further on; he therefore ordered the 1st and 2nd Brigades to halt while they replenished their ammunition, and then proceeded for about a mile, when they suddenly came in sight of Ayoob Khan's enormous camp. It was entirely deserted, and apparently stood as it had been left in the morning when the Afghans moved out to the attack. With his camp was captured the whole of Ayoob Khan's artillery—thirty-two pieces, including our two Horse Artillery guns which had been taken at Maiwand on the 27th of July."

Thus fitly ended with a glorious victory that march from Kabul to Kandahar which will ever live as one of the most notable undertakings of a British commander. It added greatly to the experience of Hector Macdonald, who for his gallant conduct in the engagement received a medal with three clasps and a bronze decoration. In addition it was now that he learned that he had received that great step forward, a commission, for which General Roberts had recommended him some months before, in respect of earlier operations in the campaign, the value of which had been recorded in despatches I have quoted. More than that, Macdonald was given a commission in his own regiment, and his brother officers presented him with his sword, bearing an inscription, as a mark of their regard. Macdonald, be it noted, had been so persistent with his studies that he was equal to most and superior to some officers of his new rank

from the educational standpoint. His careful early training, his natural modesty and cultured manners, made it easy for him to take his place amongst his brother officers and maintain it with dignity and credit.

With the victory at Kandahar tranquillity was restored, and the army dispersed in various directions. Hector Macdonald and the Gordon Highlanders were next to see hard service in South Africa.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER IX

A trip to the Cape—At war with the Boers—On Majuba Hill —Disaster to the British force—A dreadful slaughter— Macdonald forced to surrender — How he fought for victory—Boer general and "Fighting Mac"

IT had been expected—by the Gordon Highlanders at any rate — that when they left Afghanistan they were on their way to see home once more. But that was not to be. There was severe fighting proceeding in South Africa, and where hard work was to be done the army authorities seldom omitted to send the Gordon Highlanders to take their share of it. England was then engaged in a conflict with the Boers, who were endeavouring to force this country to remove the British flag from the Transvaal and grant them their independence. General Sir George Colley, an officer of much experience and of distinguished service and great gallantry, was in command of the British forces, having as his second in command General Sir Evelyn Wood. It was thought that the Boers would not have much chance of winning, but the result was

to be very different indeed from that contemplated not only in England but by the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa. Disaster to the British forces was to come, and the Gordon Highlanders, like other brave men, were to see dark days.

In January, 1881, the Boers had invaded Natal and defeated the British under Colley at Laing's Nek. Our casualties were heavy, as in all the engagements in this campaign. Shortly after this the Gordon Highlanders, coming from their great achievements in India, were landed at the Cape, and three of their companies, the officers of which included Lieutenant Hector Macdonald, were sent to join Colley's force. On February 8th General Colley made a demonstration in force on the Ingogo heights, and a prolonged engagement was fought, the forces engaged being 300 British and a body of Boers which has been variously estimated but which seems to have numbered little short of 1,000. The fight lasted from sunrise to sunset, but so gallant was the stand made by the little force under Colley that the result was a drawn battle, though our loss was very great. Of the 300 men engaged we lost 76 killed and as many wounded.

Towards the end of February, General Colley, having despatched his second in command, Sir Evelyn Wood, for reinforcements, determined to move on alone, and if possible strike an effectual blow at the enemy. On the night of February 26th

he moved out his men, the Gordon Highlanders included, and until the actual moment of starting not one of them knew what was to be their destination. The secret had been well kept. The march begun, it was learned that they were going to occupy the high hill on the left of the Nek known as Majuba or Spitzkop, one of the most precipitous hills in the district. It is described as so difficult of ascent that even in broad daylight men might well shrink from the task. The little British force that undertook the duty consisted of two companies of the 58th Regiment, two companies of the 60th Rifles, two companies of the 92nd Highlanders, and fifty men of the Naval Brigade—a splendid little body of men capable of doing fine work. They started well. An additional company of Highlanders and one of Rifles stayed with the horses at the base of the hill. The others got to the top of Majuba Hill without harm, which, in itself, was a fine achievement. At places the hill is so steep that the men had to crawl on their hands and knees, and they had to climb up dongas and over boulders. They went in single file, as noiselessly as possible, the greatest care being taken to prevent the accidental firing of a rifle or any other sound that would give the Boers warning of what the British soldiers were doing.

The camp and laager of the Boers were at the back of the hill, and as Colley's men reached the summit they could clearly see the enemy towards

the Buffalo River. The orders were that none of the men were to allow themselves to be seen if possible, as Colley, bold as was the enterprise, was fully aware of the desirability of delaying the surprise to the Boers as long as possible; and, moreover, delay meant the greater possibility of the reinforcements arriving to strengthen the British operation.

Unfortunately at daybreak some of the men incautiously exposed themselves to view. All was immediately commotion in the Boer camp. The alarm was sounded, the men were all roused, and the Boers galloped round the base of the hill in amazement, staring up at the British on the summit of the hill. It was a complete surprise for the Boers. But they knew the hill well, and Colley and his officers did not. Firing began about five o'clock that morning, the first shot being fired by Lieutenant Lucy at a man who came within range. Then the Boers began to take up their position. They knew where it was easiest to mount the hill, and, what is more, they knew where they could make the ascent in complete security from the fire of our rifles.

General Colley had thought that, once at the summit of the hill, the position would be impregnable, and that those on the hill could easily hold it against any number of assailants. He was woefully mistaken. The Boers had sharpshooters posted some distance from the hill at positions where they were able to pick off the

British soldiers with ease. And steadily, hour after hour, another portion of the Boers mounted the hill on a perfectly safe side, where, hidden from the view of our men at the summit, the rifle fire did not hit them. And while they went up and up, ever getting nearer to our men, our poor fellows were uselessly firing their ammunition away in the vain attempt to stop the enemy's ascent.

The firing was incessant, but for the first few hours the Boers' chief thought was to get near the summit of the hill, and, by eleven o'clock, only four of our men had been wounded. Captain Romilly, of the Naval Brigade, was severely wounded half an hour afterwards while standing beside General Colley, taking a survey of the position. Colonel Stewart, Major Fraser, and Captain MacGregor were with him. The British force was fairly secure up till one o'clock, when a terrific fire was opened on the left front, where the enemy had then been very largely reinforced, and on this side they were rapidly mounting to within striking distance of our position. They were concentrating on one point, and till within quite a short distance of our principal position our men never got a fair shot at them.

The Boers were completely covered behind boulders all the way along. All our men were hurried to the point at which it was seen the great attack would be made. Seeing the movement, and encouraged by it to believe that we were weak there, the Boers fired volley after volley, which our men

answered, and then made a united rush at our position. The fight lasted for over half an hour at this point, and our fellows began to waver. What could they well do, for their ammunition was running out? Even the brave Gordon Highlanders faltered. A few moments more and the men wavered again, and ran into a hollow.

"Rally on your right, men!" the officers shouted, and rally they did, at a point where the General, cool as though on parade, though fearfully conscious of the coming defeat, was standing. The men rallied splendidly, and all gathered on the crest. It was the last stand. The men were directed to fire low and steady, and so they did to the extent their small supply of ammunition would permit. Their officers were at their head, with revolver and sword in hand, encouraging their men in every possible way to continued resistance. The Boers paused, and it was hoped they were about to give way. But no; their leaders saw this was the last stand of the British force. Our men gained cover behind some clumps of stones. One little band of Gordon Highlanders was holding the direct front. "Men of the 92nd, don't forget your bayonets!" Major Fraser shouted to them. Colonel Stewart rallied the 58th, and Captain MacGregor the Naval Brigade. The men fixed bayonets and, standing shoulder to shoulder in a semicircle, fired volley after volley at the enemy. But they were enveloped on every side.

A merciless and terribly accurate fire was poured

into them, and the majority of the men, after numbers of their fellows had fallen, gave a last shout, abandoned the position, and fell back towards the next ridge. As they retired, giving up their cover, and forced to cross the open ground, there was no getting away from the murderous fire of their assailants, and the majority of them were killed between the ridges. The British soldiers were shot down without ever getting near enough to the enemy to use their bayonets. So evil were the positions and the general conditions of the fight that our men provided ready billets for the bullets of their enemies. It was indeed a miracle that any of them escaped. General Colley was the last to leave the ridge, and was shot as he left. As he turned away a Boer shot him in the back of the head. Thus ended the career of the courageous British officer who had made this fatal error.

A small remnant of the Gordon Highlanders remained. Most of them had already been killed or wounded, officers and men. Lieutenant Hector Macdonald, still unwounded, was retiring with his few remaining men to a new position, but turned again as the Boers rushed at them, and the men stood firm for a last tussle. For seven hours they had been stubbornly fighting a hopeless contest, with the bitterness of an almost certain defeat to come. At length Macdonald was disarmed. All but helpless, he found the Boers upon him. But the weapons of his early schoolboy days even now

were of some effect. He promptly knocked down three of his enemies in succession with his fists. The fighting farmers of the Transvaal, whatever their faults, are men of courage who know how to appreciate that quality in others. One of them was covering Macdonald with his rifle and was about to fire. Hector Macdonald's life was not worth a second's purchase.

Had that shot been fired he would never have lived to train the Soudanese to warfare, would never have performed deeds of heroism at Omdurman, would never have lived to return, sixteen years later, to the Transvaal to see that terrible Majuba Day avenged. But, as the farmer was about to shoot, another—one of those three who had first felt the hardness and strength of Macdonald's fist—called to his fellow to "spare that brave man"; and spared he was. There was nothing for it then, of course, but to submit to the inevitable, and Macdonald became a prisoner in the Boer hands. "He is a brave man, too good to kill," was the comment of another of his enemies; and so the courageous young Scotch lieutenant had his life allowed him. He was to live to fight the Boers again. Not only did they spare his life on this occasion, but when General Joubert heard the precise facts of the occurrence and read the inscription on the sword which had been taken from Macdonald—the sword which his brother officers had so recently presented to him for his gallantry in Afghanistan—he did all he could to

make captivity light for the young hero, and even went the length of returning to him his sword.

Some few words may be added as to the causes of the disaster. The hill had not been reconnoitred before it was taken possession of, and General Colley entertained an altogether ill-founded contempt for the fighting powers of the Boers. Colley's men had been through fatiguing engagements only a little while before, and the position our men took up, as was shown in the result, was in no sense unassailable, as had been supposed. The slopes below the brow of the hill were too steep to be searched by our fire. As a telegram to the *Times* newspaper sent immediately afterwards stated, "So long as our men's ammunition lasted, the loss on our side was very slight. It was only when forced to retreat that the slaughter commenced. The two companies of the 92nd Highlanders who were on the summit of the hill remained there throwing stones down on the advancing Boers, and afterwards received them at the point of the bayonet. The guns from Mount Prospect, our camp station, checked the pursuit of our men to a large extent."

The third company of the Gordon Highlanders, who, with a company of the Rifles, were with the horses at the base of the hill, managed to return to the camp, to which for some time straggling survivors of the fight made their way. When the record was made up it was found that of 554 men and officers engaged we had lost 92 killed and 134

wounded, besides a number who were made prisoners. The Boer return of losses was 1 killed and 5 wounded, though their records in such matters cannot be regarded as altogether reliable. The result of the disaster was immediately followed, through political considerations at home, by a conclusion of the warfare. Macdonald's next sphere of employment was to be in Egypt.

CHAPTER X

At work in Egypt—Army Organisation—Drilling the Natives and the Soudanese—A Transformation Scene—Sir A. Milner's appreciation

IN Egypt a stupendous task was undertaken by Great Britain. Its perfect achievement has been the justification for our action. The work has been carried on with results which have secured the admiration of all nations.

To a people who received us with coldness and apprehension we have been the friends, the benefactors, the saviours. From a bankrupt condition we have developed the resources of the country and the people's power of cultivating them until the day of prosperity has come with all fulness. It was a land of desolation, degradation, and despair. To-day it is a land flowing with milk and honey.

Socially as well as materially the improvement has been great.

This volume is not the place, however, in which to enter into the details of the work. Those who desire to know why it was done and how it was

done should read the wonderful story told by Sir Alfred Milner in his book on the subject.[1] From 1889 to 1892 Sir Alfred (then Mr. Milner) was Under Secretary for Finance in Egypt. Sir Alfred is now High Commissioner of South Africa and Governor of the Cape. Macdonald was in Egypt during Milner's time. The statesman and the soldier are to-day again working in their respective fields in the southern portion of that Continent the northern territories of which received so much useful and beneficial attention from them in the past.

One of the most important features of England's work in Egypt has been the reorganisation and transformation of the fighting force under British officers. Macdonald, as Lieutenant, Captain, Major, and Lieutenant-Colonel, played his part in that work.

Milner starts a chapter in his book on this subject with the following striking extracts :—

"Marched yesterday morning with 3,500 towards Tokar. . . . Our square being only threatened by small force of enemy—certainly less than a thousand strong—Egyptian troops threw down their arms and ran, allowing themselves to be killed without the slightest resistance. More than 2,000 killed. All material lost" (Extract from General Baker's telegram, describing his defeat at El Teb, on the road to Tokar, on Feb. 5, 1884).

"The main body of Dervishes were fifty yards

[1] "England in Egypt," by Sir Alfred Milner. 1895.

from our front line, and were extending to the right and left to envelop our position. The bulk of their force was directed against the line occupied by the 12th battalion, their attack being pushed home with their usual intrepidity and fearlessness. The troops, however, stood their ground, and did not yield one inch throughout the line" (Extract from Colonel Holled-Smith's report describing his victory of Afafit, on the road to Tokar, on Feb. 19, 1891).

Sir A. Milner comments upon the change thus :—

"The same attacking enemy—adroit, sudden, and absolutely fearless; the same region of storm-swept desert and treacherous scrub, save that at El Teb the ground was comparatively open, while at Afafit the ambush—sheltering mimosa bushes, ten feet high—came close up to the line of march; the same human material on the side of Egypt—for there were no British soldiers, officers excepted, at Afafit, any more than at El Teb—yet how different the result! And this is no accidental contrast. I could parallel the misconduct of Baker's troops at El Teb by a dozen passages in the despatches recording the series of disgraceful defeats by which, in less than six months, the old Egyptian army lost the whole of the Eastern Soudan. And, similarly, the honourable record of the action at Afafit could be paralleled by many instances of steadiness and gallantry on the part of the new Egyptian army during the recent years of weary frontier warfare about Suakin and Wady Halfa.

"Why does the old army stand almost unequalled

in history for cowardice and incapacity? Why has the new army, composed of very much the same elements, so soon achieved an honourable record? It is easy to answer that the difference arises from the fact that the new army has been created by British officers.

"But that answer only leads to a fresh question. By what magic is it that these men—average British officers, for the most part, and no more—have produced such remarkable results? How is it that they have changed the fighting character of a nation in so short a time?

"To whom is the credit principally due? There are many who deserve credit, and I believe that those gallant soldiers, who of late years have led the Egyptian forces to victories that have made a certain noise in the world, would be the first to admit that a large portion of it belongs to the men who, in the early days of the army, when everybody ridiculed the idea of fellahin ever fighting, patiently laid the foundations of all the subsequent success. Perhaps the greatest of their merits was to have believed in the possibility of a native Egyptian army at all.

"With the miserable collapse of Arabi's large host still fresh in everybody's memory, with reports of the disgraceful and unsoldierlike conduct of the Egyptian troops in the Soudan pouring in from every side, it required a good deal of courage and a good deal of imagination to picture the same class of men standing steady under fire, and even against

cold steel, and becoming a terror to their enemies instead of being a scourge to the peaceful population whom they were intended to protect."

At Suakin in 1884 a 9th battalion of Soudanese was formed. It was the first of the famous black regiments. The experiment of enlisting these blacks proved a great success. In January, 1886, another battalion of the same kind, the 10th Soudanese, was added to the army. In June of the same year came the 13th Soudanese, in December, 1887, the 11th Soudanese, and finally, in November, 1888, the 12th Soudanese.

As to these black soldiers I quote the same eminent authority already mentioned in this chapter. Milner wrote: "Be it observed that the term black, in this connection, is *not*, as it is so often, an exaggeration or a figure of speech. Not even the most sensitive Radical could object to the 9th–13th Soudanese being described as 'black men,' and they themselves are rather proud than otherwise of their own hue of deepest ebony. They are *not* natives of Egypt, but belong for the most part to the Shillúk and Dinka tribes, who are found on the Upper Nile, from some little distance above Khartoum right away to the Equatorial Province. Others come from the west beyond Kordofan, and even from as far as Wadai and Bornu.

"In civilisation they are far below the inhabitants of Egypt. They are indeed mere children, with the thoughtlessness, the waywardness, and the want of

foresight of children. But under officers who know how to command their respect and win their affection they have all a child's docility and devotion.

"As soldiers the blacks are the very reverse of the Egyptians. They are not quick at drill, or fond of it. What they are fond of, and what they shine in, is real battle. It is true they have *sang-froid.* They easily get excited and are hard to hold. The difficulty is to prevent them from firing too fast or charging too soon. At Afafit one of the Soudanese battalions could only be stopped from blazing away at the enemy by their commanding officer going out of the line and passing in front of their rifles. But when it actually comes to close quarters, to charging or receiving a charge, then they have few equals. They have a natural instinct for combat which training may improve, but can never beget.

"A noticeable fact is the sort of camaraderie which seems rapidly to spring up between the blacks and Englishmen. . . . The friendship formed between the 79th Highlanders and the 9th Soudanese at the time of the battle of Ginnis is a pleasing case in point. The Highlanders presented their swarthy companions with a flag which the latter carry along with their regimental colours to this day; and the 9th Soudanese have sometimes been playfully described as 'The second battalion of the Cameron Highlanders.'"

This testimony of Milner to the work of England in Egypt is given here because it is one of the most

notable tributes to the successful labours of, amongst other distinguished men, Hector Macdonald. It was Sirdar Sir Evelyn Wood who began the undertaking. Grenfell, Chermside, Hallam, Parr, Watson, Wodehouse, Kitchener, Rundle, Macdonald, were amongst many British officers who assisted in and continued it. If the military strength had not been built up, the reconquest of the Soudan (which should never have been given up to the cruel and devastating sway of Mahdism) could not have been accomplished in the famous campaigns of Lord Kitchener.

To write the story of the military training which changed the previously poor and timid Egyptians and Soudanese into soldiers fitted to stand shoulder to shoulder with the best of British troops would need a volume to itself. For his share of the task and for his gallantry and skilful leadership in several important engagements, Hector Macdonald rose to be a Colonel and covered his breast with medals and decorations. Some account of the more important of the battles in which he was engaged in Egypt and the Soudan will be given in the succeeding chapters.

26084

CHAPTER XI

To Gordon's relief—In the "Too Late" Expedition—Garrison Adjutant at Assiout—Lieutenant to Captain—Suakin operations—Gemaizah successes and rewards—Toski engagement—The D.S.O.—Capture of Tokar—The Osmanieh Order—Captain to Major—Dongola Expedition—Firkit—Hafir—Promotion to Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel.

LIEUTENANT MACDONALD was engaged with his regiment, the Gordon Highlanders, in the attempt to relieve General Gordon at Khartoum in 1884–85. As every one knows, the expedition was despatched too late, unhappily for Gordon.

Though he had anticipated being able to stand a much more prolonged siege, Gordon's difficulties increased. Information which he had despatched as to the sad conditions to which he had been reduced and the urgent need for speed if relief was to come, fell, unfortunately, into the hands of the enemy, who soon afterwards, knowing in consequence the weakness of the garrison, made a rush for the place, captured it, killed Gordon, and then indulged in an orgie of almost inconceivable cruelty. Those who care to

learn what Mahdism was when in its power will find all the horrible details described in the narrative which Father Ohrwalder wrote after his escape from captivity in the Mahdi's camp. Mahdism was a Satanic rule of lust, savagery, and humbug.

The Gordon Relief Expedition was, as just stated, arranged too late. Once it was determined upon it was sent forward with the utmost rapidity, and Lord Wolseley offered prizes for the quickest passages made by the troops in row boats up the Nile. The Gordons won the second prize. When at last the Expedition arrived at Khartoum it was to be met with a fierce fusilade which conveyed to them the sad news that the place had fallen. So the troops were compelled to return.

For years afterwards, though the far Soudan was abandoned to its fate, fighting of a serious character took place, but the task of Macdonald was changed. He was sent to assist in the fashioning of that fine native army which under its British directors was destined in later years to reconquer the Soudan and avenge the murder of Gordon.

Macdonald for a few months held the appointment of Garrison Adjutant at Assiout. Leaving this post, he, under that excellent arrangement by which British officers were lent to the Khedive for the work that England had undertaken to do, Macdonald, parting company with his old regiment, joined the Egyptian gendarmerie which had been organised by poor Baker Russell. He still held, of course, his

commission in the Gordon Highlanders. Giving up the plumed bonnet of the Highlanders he now had to wear a tasselled fez, and during this period he used his linguistic faculty, which had always been great, for the acquisition of Arabic. He speaks that language well. From the gendarmerie he entered the Egyptian army, and was by his knowledge of the language helped very considerably in that careful study of the native character which enabled him to understand the people, to develop their then latent powers, and to lead them so successfully. He was raised to the rank of Captain in January, 1888, and was with Sir Francis Grenfell's army in its operations during that year, taking part in the Suakin operations, and commanding the Soudanese during the siege of that place. On September 13, 1888, Lieutenant-Colonel Holled-Smith succeeded Colonel Kitchener as Commandant at Suakin, where several actions took place. Sirdar Grenfell arrived there in November, and on December 20th was fought the great battle of Gemaizah.

Sirdar Grenfell's victory at Gemaizah was a very brilliant affair, and a great success was won with only trifling loss on our side. The Soudanese troops acted with much bravery. The enemy held a strong position. Their trenches lay to the south-west of the North (Shoata) and South Water (Gemaizah) forts, the latter being connected by an embankment running nearly due north. The main trenches were roughly on a radius of 850 to

900 yards from the South Water fort, and 1,000 yards in length. They traversed two khors, the north flank being carried about fifty yards beyond the crest of a spur, the south flank on a knoll south-south-west of the South Water fort. The ground to the west of the trenches is a succession of open spurs running roughly east and west, divided by bushy khors, but on the south-west the thick bush approaches more closely the south flank.

Owing to the ground to the west of the enemy's north flank being clear and practical for cavalry, and the existence of a deep khor to the north of the north flank, which would afford excellent cover to form for attack before coming under fire, General Grenfell determined to attack the enemy on their north flank, at the same time making a feint on their south flank. Stations were established on the various forts and other positions, and in communication with H.M.S. *Racer*.

On the morning of the attack the troops marched out at 6.30 a.m. The 1st Brigade—9th Soudanese battalions, 10th Soudanese, 12th Soudanese—were under Colonel Kitchener, C.M.G., A.D.C. The 2nd Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers were stationed in Fort Shaata, and the 1st Battalion Welsh Regiment was in Fort Gemaizah. The engagement throughout was fierce, but the enemy were completely defeated in two hours. The success was greatly helped by the Naval Brigade, who kept Osman Digna's troops

in Handoub while the battle was fought and won.

This is what the Sirdar, General Sir F. Grenfell, said in his official report about the work of the blacks and of Captain Macdonald's services: "The Soudanese troops of Colonel Kitchener and Colonel Smith's brigades, led by English officers, amply justified my confidence in them. The Soudanese soldiers behaved not only with gallantry, but steadiness. They advanced 300 yards under fire without firing a shot; and even when the trenches were reached they did not entirely lose their formation. Led by British officers, the Black Brigade will become a powerful engine. The black not only hates the Dervish, but despises him, and has not the slightest hesitation in attacking him, even when in superior numbers. This confidence in themselves and in their British officers is of enormous value in savage warfare.

"I concur in his (Colonel Kitchener's) recommendation of Captain H. A. Macdonald, Gordon Highlanders, and others who have ably commanded the battalions that have garrisoned Suakin during a harassing siege."

In addition to being most honourably mentioned in the despatches, Captain Macdonald now received a medal with clasp, and was also presented with the Khedive's star.

Toski, which came in the following year, was his next serious engagement, and one which brought

him great honours. Suakin, after the Gemaizah fight, was declared open to traffic, and in the summer of 1889, Colonel Wodehouse had a hard fight with a strong force of Dervishes near Wadi Halfa. The garrison at Assouan was strengthened, and General Grenfell arrived in the middle of July at Colonel Wodehouse's camp at Bellana. The enemy were then in great force at Khor, under Wad-el-Nejumi, who, apparently thinking that the Egyptian troops, under the British, were weak, called upon them to surrender. They were threatened with the fate of General Gordon if they did not.

The battle of Toski was fought on August 3rd, British and Egyptian regiments constituting our force. Kitchener's division made an important reconnaissance before the battle. When Kitchener's brigade got near the Dervish position some camel-men were captured, who stated that Nejumi was just leaving on his northward march. Shortly afterwards the enemy were seen to be moving. Our reconnaissance having been sighted, their riflemen were pushed to the front and opened fire on the cavalry. Colonel Kitchener was ordered to withdraw his cavalry behind a small hill half a mile to the north of the enemy's camp, and to line a ridge with the dismounted camel corps.

As the enemy were reported to be coming on in force, a message was sent in to Toski for more troops, the 1st Infantry Brigade, consisting of the 9th, 10th, and 12th Soudanese battalions (strength,

53 officers, 1,428 non-commissioned officers and men, and two guns Horse Artillery). A steady fire from our dismounted cavalry and camel corps was kept up on the Dervish skirmishers, who were gradually being reinforced. The 11th Soudanese battalion and Egyptian troops were then obtained from Toski.

The infantry, the 9th battalion, under Wodehouse, was extended to the right, when Dervish spearmen, under Emir Abdel Halim, charging in force the right of our position, came on with determined rush, but were shot down to a man by this battalion under Brevet-Major Lloyd, Yorkshire Light Infantry (Egyptian Artillery). The 9th battalion and one company of the second battalion under Captain Martyr, advanced to occupy the left of the Dervish position, and at the same time the whole line moved forward with both flanks to envelop the rest of the position.

The centre was stormed with great steadiness by the 10th Soudanese, and the Dervishes were driven from the heights with considerable loss to them as they retreated from their cover behind a hill. A large number of standards were captured. The 13th battalion stormed the extreme right of the Dervish position, which was an isolated hill, but there were so many of the enemy that a temporary check occurred. A hand-to-hand fight ensued, and the Dervishes fought bravely. This and the centre position were found to have been a Dervish

stronghold where most of the principal Emirs were killed. In the rear of the left centre of the Dervishes over a thousand of them were found dead.

It was here that Captain Macdonald's men did their share of the fight, and his 11th Soudanese battalion, which he was commanding, was praised by General Grenfell in the despatches "for materially assisting in the capture of the left Dervish position."

The capture of this place forced the retreat of the Dervishes in this part of the field, and shortly afterwards Captain Macdonald's battalion, with the 1st and 2nd Egyptian battalions and the 9th, 10th, and 13th Soudanese, were ordered to attack the second position, which was a very strong one. The 11th Soudanese advanced with great steadiness, drums beating and bugles blowing. The Dervishes, however, had already suffered so heavily that they made but little opposition, and the hills were rapidly cleared, while the Egyptian cavalry, coming round on the right flank, entered into pursuit.

On gaining the heights the enemy's camp was found on the low ground just beyond. It was captured, and with it large numbers of drums, spears, swords, and banners.

The remnant of the Dervish force was now in full retreat in a south-westerly direction, being followed into the desert upwards of eight miles from Toski. Horses and men were tired out from fatigue and thirst, so the pursuit ceased at 2 p.m. The dead body of Wad-el-Nejumi was found on a camel

shortly before the halt. It was surrounded by Nejumi's body-guard, who were all killed in trying to take away the body. The Dervish losses were estimated at 1,500 killed, and there were upwards of 3,000 prisoners, many of whom were wounded.

"I cannot speak too highly," said General Grenfell, "of the conduct of all ranks in this action—English cavalry, Egyptian cavalry, artillery, camel corps and infantry—all did excellent service.

"As regards the infantry, all movements were promptly executed, the Dervish charges received steadily in line, and positions were taken with great dash and gallantry. I would particularly mention the 1st Brigade under Major Hunter, who bore the brunt of the fight and has been in the field since 2nd of July.

"The advance of the 11th battalion (Captain Macdonald's) on the second Dervish position was well carried out, and the 1st and 2nd Egyptian battalions, both on that occasion and earlier in the fight, showed the same eagerness as the Soudanese battalions to close with the enemy."

For this service Captain Macdonald received the much-coveted D.S.O. Wherever great fighting was necessary and Macdonald was there it always was done, and his Soudanese troops followed their leader with devotion. He was now becoming popularly known as "Fighting Mac," and he was thoroughly earning that designation.

The result of the Toski engagement was the

pacification of this region. Two years later came the capture of Tokar, at which "Fighting Mac" again distinguished himself. In February, 1891, Colonel Holled-Smith, Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral, advanced with 2,000 Soudanese and Egyptian troops and occupied and fortified El Teb. He then immediately proceeded against Tokar, which was strongly held by Osman Digna. The force included the 11th battalion Soudanese, again commanded by Captain Macdonald. The troops pushed on quickly through very thick bush in order to seize an old Government building, now in ruins. The Dervishes seeing the object of the troops, moved forward with great rapidity, gradually enveloping the ruins, but the Egyptians succeeded in reaching the shelter of the buildings some five minutes before the attack began from the bush, which grew all round at a distance of less than fifty yards. The enemy advanced to the assault with desperate determination, and after severe hand-to-hand fighting, lasting for more than an hour, during which the Egyptian cavalry made a brilliant charge, the Dervishes were forced to retire, completely broken up and crushed. The Soudanese infantry greatly distinguished themselves. After the retreat of the enemy our troops found upwards of 700 dead around the position, and there were also a large number of corpses lying in the bush. Almost every Emir of importance fell in the action except Osman Digna himself, who did

not join in the fight, but watched the progress from Afafit.

After leaving a garrison at Tokar the troops marched on Afafit, taking hills occupied by the enemy in the flank, and on reaching Afafit found the place vacated by the enemy. Some hundreds of Arabs who were in the immediate vicinity surrendered quietly. Osman Digna had left Afafit. He was always well in front of a retreat.

Captain Macdonald's services had gained for him another step in rank and further decoration. He was gazetted a major on July 8, 1897, and received for the Tokar engagement the third class of the Osmanieh. As major he joined the Royal Fusiliers, the regiment to which he still belongs, although he has now reached so high a position that he will never lead it personally into battle.

For five years after this Major Macdonald, commanding the Soudanese, was engaged in that great work of preparing, under the new Sirdar, Kitchener, for the final advance on Khartoum. Early in March, 1896, it was decided to reconquer the Dongola province. The first column marched on the 18th of March across the frontier, occupying Akasha. The lines of communication were protected by various posts, and local Arabs guarded the line of the old railway which had been destroyed completely by the Dervishes. Levies of friendly Arabs watched the roads and wells of the eastern and western deserts. Meanwhile, Osman Digna had been co-

operating in the siege of Kassala, and proceeded by forced marches towards Suakin, and took up a position at Erkowit.

Lieutenant-Colonel Lloyd, D.S.O., having formed a field column from the Suakin and Tokar garrison, was attacked while marching in Khor Wintri by Osman Digna's force, which was driven back, and soon afterwards retired from the district.

Early in April the Dervishes moved their advanced post from Suarda to Firket, whither reinforcements were constantly despatched for Dongola. On May 1st a skirmish took place a few miles from Akasha between three squads of cavalry and Dervishes. The latter retired on Firket. The railway was reached at Ambyol Wells early in June. The Dervish patrols were seen in the neighbourhood, and, having received information that more serious interference with working parties was intended, the Sirdar deemed it necessary to attack and drive the enemy out of Firket. This operation was successfully performed on the morning of June 7th. The cavalry pursued to Suarda, which was occupied, and the Dervishes fell back on Dongola.

The railway was pushed on to Kosheh, and completed on August 4th.

At this period the Dervishes were in great strength at Hafir and Kerma, and in September further successes were scored here by the British general, Hafir being occupied on September 20th. The result of these operations was to completely stop the Dervish

raids, and 450 miles of the Nile Valley were added to the Egyptian territory. "The operations demonstrated," said Sirdar Kitchener, "the high qualities, endurance, and bravery of the Egyptian troops, and I have only to add that no case of want of discipline or attempt to shirk duty has occurred; indeed the high spirit and eagerness which the troops have displayed under many very trying circumstances is beyond praise. Egyptian soldiers have frequently been found to have concealed sickness, and, in spite of severe footsores, to have marched uncomplainingly in order to be present with their comrades when an engagement was imminent."

Major Hector Macdonald was specially referred to for his services. Steps up the ladder of fame were now being rapidly made, and he was given the great reward of being made a brevet-lieutenant-colonel. He was also given the Khedive's medal with two clasps. The great forward movements in which his greatest achievements were to be accomplished were to come very soon.

CHAPTER XII

The Atbara campaign—An unexpected movement—Macdonald's Soudanese to the front—Another rapid march—The attack on Mahmoud's forces—Brilliant British success—How "Old Mac's" men acted.

WITH plenty of hard work accomplished it was expected that the close of the year 1897 would bring a period of rest and that serious fighting would not again take place until the following summer. The movements of the Khalifa, however, caused apprehension, and on December 31st Major-General Hunter sent from Berber an urgent request for reinforcements. They were sent so promptly that the first detachment of the additional troops—Camerons, Lincolns, and Warwicks—was proceeding up the Nile two days afterwards. A strong British force was rapidly concentrated. The Sirdar showed then his wonderful power of organisation. He had at his command for the Atbara campaign a total force of about 13,000 men. There were three Egyptian brigades and one British. Major-General Hunter was in command of the Egyptian division.

The 1st Brigade was, at the commencement of the campaign, still quartered at Berber. It consisted of the 9th, 10th, and 11th Soudanese, commanded respectively by Walter, Nason, and Jackson; and of the 2nd Egyptian, under Pink. The brigadier was Lieutenant-Colonel Hector Archibald Macdonald, whom the late Mr. G. W. Steevens, that talented young war correspondent, who was then at the front, described at this time in these words: "In person 'Old Mac'—he is under fifty, but anything above forty is elderly in the Egyptian army—is of middle height but very broad—so sturdily built that you might imagine him to be armour-plated under his clothes. He walks and rides with a resolute solidity bespeaking more strength than agility. He has been known to have fever, but never to be unfit for duty." The 2nd Brigade consisted of the 12th, 13th, and 14th Soudanese and the 8th Egyptian, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Maxwell, while an all Egyptian brigade was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis. The cavalry was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Broadwood. The artillery was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Long. Major-General Gatacre had a British brigade consisting of the 1st Lincolnshire, 1st Cameron Highlanders, 1st Warwickshire, and these were later on joined by the 1st Seaforth Highlanders. With them was a battery of Maxims under Major Hunter-Blair. The British brigade was as fine as could be selected. The Soudanese and Egyptians had, by such training

as men like Hector Macdonald had given them over a course of years, been brought to a state of military efficiency of which many striking evidences had been and were to be given.

A forward move was made by Gatacre's brigade in February, and Abu Dis was reached. The rapidity with which the movement was made and the camps changed was much commented upon by the special war correspondents who accompanied the expedition. At Abu Dis the men settled down for, it was supposed, a time of quietude while railroad construction was being proceeded with. From this place news of the enemy's strength and activity at Shendy was received. Great preparations were proceeding in Mahmoud's camp, and the enemy were said to be boasting that they were going to sweep the country clear of the Khedival forces. It was decided that the army must push on, and so Abu Dis was left behind after only a few days' stay. The long march of nearly a hundred miles to Debeka was then made, and the place was reached on March 3rd, 1898. It was a forced march and a brilliant one. Altogether 118 miles were covered in five days, including a day's halt. Only bare necessaries were carried on the journey, but the "necessaries" included of course the ammunition, which was the chief weight carried. The men were greatly hampered by the condition of their boots, as to which serious complaints were made and questions subsequently asked in the House of Commons.

During that rapid forward movement the soldiers who had capacity for cobbling were in great demand. After each ten miles' march an hour and a half's halt was taken and food served. There was a brief rest at Debeker and then the brigade went on to Berber, where the men received a hearty welcome from the populace and from their comrades of the Soudanese and Egyptian troops. These men, a portion of whom, as has been noted, were commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Hector Macdonald, added to their greeting very welcome little cups of coffee and cigarettes. Some remarks made by Mr. Bennet Burleigh, the bright and brilliant special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, in his book[1] as to these troops are interesting. He says: "Latitudinarian or eccentric as these negroes may be regarded by Christians in their martial affairs, they never omit to transmit to their wives for the time being every penny they are allowed to send them. Indeed, if these Soudanese black soldiers had their wishes acceded to they would remit the women and children every farthing due to them by the paymasters, and all they had acquired by other means, leaving themselves absolutely penniless, such is their uxorious devotion." Mr. Burleigh also, in commenting upon the conditions of his journey to Berber, mentions that food was not very luxurious and that water was scarce

[1] "Sirdar and Khalifá; or, the Reconquest of the Soudan," 1898, by Bennet Burleigh.

(the correspondent was not travelling at the time with the army) and he gratefully adds that when they reached the camp at Berber "Colonel Macdonald treated us to the luxuries of the use of his bath-tub, soap, and towels, and then gave us a splendid breakfast, and later on lunch, the first good meals we had had since quitting Wady Halfa." At Berber camp, Mr. Burleigh remarked that the natives had by that time solved what had once been (to them) the difficult problem of the kilt of the Highlanders. This is how they summed up the gallant Scotch soldier: "He is like ourselves," they declared. "All these in the *petticoats* are wild, fierce men—Dervishes if you will—who have sworn to avenge Gordon and never more appear in trousers until they take Khartoum."

"Fighting Mac's" brigade was the first to proceed to Kenur, where the great concentration was to take place before Mahmoud's forces were to be attacked. They left the town to the tune of enthusiastic shouts from the populace. In fact the natives seemed unable to do too much to show their appreciation of the British forces, upon whom they looked as their deliverers from a system of brutality which had reduced their numbers in a pitiable manner. The cruel and murderous rule of the Khalifa had enslaved and degraded the Soudanese in a terrible way, and at last there was the hope of being saved from further molestation. Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald's force was followed

to Kenur by the division under Colonel Maxwell and by General Gatacre's British brigade, and rapidly the whole of the troops were encamped at and around that place. There many interesting scenes were witnessed, the arrival of each addition to the forces being specially marked by those already at the camp. When the Seaforth Highlanders, coming through from Cairo, arrived in the gunboats *Metemmeh* and *Tamai*, they received a special ovation, Macdonald's Soudanese brigade being amongst the first to give them greeting. Kenur was left on March 20th. The troops moved onwards, delighted at the prospect of early fighting. As the forward movement proceeded there were frequent alarms and occasional skirmishes with bodies of the enemy with whom Macdonald's men were engaged. In these brushes the enemy suffered some loss, our forces none. Attempts were made to lure Mahmoud on to battle, but they were not productive of the desired result. Shendy and Hosh Ben Naga were captured. The Sirdar's forces, having been encamped at Ras-el-Hudi, continued the advance in the first week of April. There was a sharp tussle between our cavalry and artillery and the enemy on April 5th, in which we lost some men before the Dervishes retired.

At Nundabiya the Sirdar's force encamped within a few miles of the enemy's outposts. The last stage of the march was made on the evening of April 7th. When on the following day the army awoke it was

in sight of Mahmoud's forces. The magnificent fighting organisation that the Sirdar had with him was in first-rate condition and eager for the coming combat. The men, white and black, had been trained with the utmost care by the skilful Sirdar for the work that lay before them. Probably no army was ever more fit for the work it had to do, whether the men belonged to Gatacre's English brigade or to the native troops under Hunter, Macdonald, Maxwell, and Lewis. Mahmoud's men were also quite ready for this Atbara combat, on which so much depended.

General Gatacre's brigade, with those under Macdonald and Maxwell, led the attack, which began at daybreak on Good Friday. Macdonald's brigade followed that of Gatacre. The men were going forward with the consciousness that they would avenge the capture of Khartoum and the death of Gordon. On and on the British forces went, and as the moment for the battle came near the Sirdar visited every division of his army, giving his last instructions and advice to Gatacre, Macdonald, Maxwell, Lewis, and the leaders of the valuable naval brigade and the artillery. Highlanders, southerners, seamen, Egyptians, Soudanese pressed forward with loud hurrahs. There was some doubt whether Mahmoud would fight after all. He intended to do so, and our men were not disappointed. Nearer and nearer they got to the enemy's position. A hot rifle-fire was poured in from the enemy's zareba, Macdonald's

men getting a good share of the fusilade. The decisive assault came about breakfast-time. The general advance was ordered about eight o'clock in the morning.

Macdonald, at the head of his Soudanese, was one of the first to enter the zareba and to engage in hand-to-hand fighting with the enemy. The following is an extract from the stirring and picturesque account of the battle within the zareba as described by Mr. Bennet Burleigh in his book "Sirdar and Khalifa": "Away upon our right Major-General Hunter had ridden in advance of the Egyptian and Soudanese troops, waving his helmet and sword and calling them on. The blacks responded with charmed alacrity, their brigadiers and English officers in the forefront leading them. Although relatively their officers did not lose heavily, the rank and file suffered greatly. Their bravery and daring deserve every praise. Yet let it never be too hastily assumed that the measure of casualties is a sure gauge of the fierceness of an enemy's resistance. Major Townsend of the 12th Soudanese stalked far in front of his men, a stick in one hand and his revolver in the other. "Bravo, Townsend!" cried General Hunter; an observation subsequently repeated by the Sirdar. Yet he and Colonel Macdonald had practically risen from sick-beds to lead their men to battle. Majors Walter and Jackson, respectively of the 9th and 11th Soudanese, had mcuh hard fighting, as had also the 10th

black battalion. . . . Only once was something like a temporary check experienced. That was when the troops had all but gained the high ground in the middle of the zareba. From an inner zareba, tukals, bush, and a fort, a rifle-fire of great intensity was sprung upon us. The 11th Soudanese (Macdonald's), the Camerons, and the Seaforths were the first upon whom burst the fury of the blast. It was Mahmoud's inner *dem*, or keep, that we had run full against, and the place was held by 2,000 or more of his specially chosen followers. A company of the 11th Soudanese, without the least hesitation, tried to rush the north-west corner. Before a storm of bullets the company was all but annihilated, losing nearly 100 men in killed and wounded and several officers. Other companies of the brave 11th blacks sprang forward and charged home."

In that graphic picture of the scene by a daring war correspondent on the spot it is made manifest how splendidly those Soudanese whom Macdonald had drilled so carefully acted in the battle. In every direction whites and blacks of the Sirdar's forces were fighting with the greatest gallantry, and soon the battle was won and the "Cease fire" was sounded. All was over, and there was nothing but rejoicing and mutual congratulations in the Sirdar's army.

Mahmoud, who was a nephew of the Khalifa, was captured. Osman Digna, as usual, escaped. Our casualties, all told, were about 500. As for the

enemy, they lost between 2,000 and 3,000 in killed alone. The rest had fled, and many afterwards died in the desert. The army of Mahmoud had ceased to be.

In the official despatches special mention was made of the services of the infantry, General Hunter highly commending their conduct. The Sirdar, in his despatch, endorsed this appreciation by saying: "I fully confirm General Hunter's remarks on the valuable services of the three brigadiers commanding the infantry brigades, viz., Lieutenant-Colonel Maxwell, Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis, and Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald. They handled their troops with precision, leading them gallantly in action, and they have shown themselves fully qualified as commanders of troops in the field."

CHAPTER XIII

After Atbara—The new campaign—On to the south—Crushing the Khalifa—The great battle—"The cockpit of the fight"—Gallant Soudanese—"The hero of Omdurman"—C.B. and A.D.C. to the Queen—Lieutenant-Colonel to Brigadier-General.

AFTER the victory on the Atbara the troops returned north, and Colonel Macdonald's brigade resumed garrison duty at Berber. The Sirdar, when he reached that place, entered it at the head of "Old Mac's" brigade—a tribute to the gallantry of Macdonald's Soudanese troops which was particularly pleasing to the natives, and which caused no enmity amongst the English soldiers, who fully recognised the fine fighting qualities of their coloured comrades-in-arms. Macdonald's men had, as already noted, suffered heavily in the fighting, but the remainder of them looked in thoroughly good condition, and, in honour of their leader, their band included Scotch airs amongst their performances on the day the Sirdar made his re-entry into Berber. The inhabitants of that place had given the Sirdar's forces a great send-off.

They gave them a magnificent reception when they came back, their task accomplished. The Berber people were able to appreciate all the advantages of security, comfort, and prosperity which the victory of the Sirdar's army meant to them. As soon as the news of the victory spread many fugitives came in and surrendered. A peaceful period for rest had apparently then arrived—a period which was to be spent by the Sirdar in preparations for the final advance.

The next campaign opened a good deal earlier than many persons had anticipated. By August it had been determined to start, and again there was to be an Egyptian as well as an English division of infantry, in addition to English and Egyptian cavalry, a strong artillery division, and a number of gunboats and steamers for the river attack. Colonel Macdonald's brigade consisted of the same three regiments which had taken part in the Atbara campaign. Colonels Lewis and Maxwell, the other two brigadiers, also commanded their old brigades.

The black battalions arrived at the Atbara on the first day of August. Major-General Gatacre again commanded the British division, Colonel Wauchope being with him. Camerons, Seaforths, Lincolns, and Warwicks, Northumberland and Lancashire Fusiliers, the 1st Grenadier Guards, the 2nd Rifle Brigade, the 21st Lancers, and the Royal Irish Fusiliers were amongst the Sirdar's

troops. Once the march forward was begun there was no long halt. It was on, on, on, ever on towards Omdurman; and, as was always the case when Sirdar Kitchener was in charge, every step of the way was facilitated by the excellence of the transport and service arrangements. Nevertheless it was an arduous task, that hurried desert march.

Ultimately the whole of the troops under the command of Sir Herbert Kitchener were concentrated at the north end of the Sixth Cataract, in close proximity to which an advanced supply depôt had been previously formed at Nasri Island. The troops began moving by successive divisions to Jebel Royan, where a depôt of supplies and a British communication hospital of 200 beds were established, on August 24th.

Four days later the army marched to Wadi el Abid, and on the following day proceeded to Sazal. Arrived there, the Sirdar sent a letter to the Khalifa warning him to remove his women and children, as he (the Sirdar) intended to bombard Omdurman unless he surrendered. Next day the army marched to Sururab, and, on September 1st reached the village of Egeiga, two miles south of the Kerreri hills, and within six miles of Omdurman. Patrols of the enemy's horsemen were frequently seen during the march falling back before the British cavalry, and their outposts were driven in beyond Egeiga. Our scouts then came in full view

of Omdurman, from which large bodies of the enemy were seen streaming out and marching north.

At noon from the slopes of Jebel Surgham the entire Dervish army was seen some three miles off advancing towards the British force, the Khalifa's black flag, surrounded by his Malazemin (body-guard) being plainly discernible. The Sirdar estimated the numbers of the enemy at 35,000, but on subsequent investigation he found that he had under-estimated a force which probably numbered nearer 50,000. What the Khalifa had intended was to have met the Sirdar's army at Kerreri, but the rapid advance of the British forces had altogether surprised him and spoiled his plans.

Immediately on seeing the enemy the Sirdar disposed his troops around the village of Egeiga, which formed an excellent position, with a clear field of fire in every direction, and shelter trenches and zarebas were prepared. Shortly after noon the Sirdar's vedettes reported that the enemy had halted, and later on it was observed that they were preparing bivouacs and lighting fires. The news was brought that the Khalifa contemplated a night attack on the position occupied by the Sirdar's army, and consequently preparations were made to prevent this. At the same time the Egeiga villagers were sent out to obtain information in the direction of the enemy's camp with the idea that the Sirdar contemplated a night attack.

The result of this ruse was that the British army

got a good night's rest, for on the Khalifa learning that the Sirdar was very much awake and had some idea of making a night attack himself, he decided to remain in his position for the night, and left the British soldiers undisturbed. In the meanwhile the gunboats, under Commander Keppel, brought up a howitzer battery, and they were able to take up a good position commanding Omdurman, which was forthwith shelled, and the conspicuous dome over the Mahdi's tomb was partially demolished. A heavy cannonade was also brought to bear upon the enemy's forts.

Early the next morning, September 2nd, the enemy advanced to the attack, the shouts of the advancing Dervish army becoming audible before 7 a.m. The Sirdar's army was ready for them. The firing began at short range. It was close fighting all the way through. The day had come when once and for all the evil strength of Mahdism was to be stamped out.

Both sides knew the importance of the struggle—it was to be now or never that the Mahdi's power was to be reasserted or destroyed utterly. No one can study the records of that fight as described by the correspondents who witnessed it without concluding that it was one of the most terrible combats men have ever fought. There were times when it looked as if things would go hard for the British cause. The blacks of the 13th battalion were storming Jebel Surgham. Lewis and Macdonald, with their

two brigades, were engaged in the fiercest of the fighting. Their black soldiers fought magnificently. They were as steady and true as any English battalion. The material in them was good, and they had learned to love and trust completely Macdonald Bey and Lewis Bey and other British officers who had drilled them.

It was upon the blacks that the fate of the day to a large extent depended. They were the recipients of two of the most savage onslaughts of the Khalifa's forces. It was seen that upon the defeat of their division more than all else depended, and the Khalifa recognised the fact and did his best to win. How this portion—the conclusive portion—of the battle was fought has been brilliantly told by Mr. G. W. Steevens in his book, "With Kitchener to Khartoum." [1] He says:—

"Now began the fiercest fight of that fierce day. The Khalifa brought up his own black banner again; his staunchest die-hards drove it into the earth and locked their ranks about it. . . . It was victory or Paradise now. For us it was victory or shredded flesh and bones unburied, crackling under the red slippers of Baggara victors. It was the very crux and crisis of the fight. If Macdonald went, Lewis on his left and Collinson and the supporting camel corps and the newly returned cavalry, all on his right or rear, must all go too. . . . But Hunter Pasha was there,

[1] "With Kitchener to Khartoum," by G. W. Steevens. W. Blackwood & Sons.

and Macdonald Bey was there, born fighting-men both, whom no danger can flurry and no sudden shift in the kaleidoscope of battle disconcert. Hunter sent for Wauchope's 1st British Brigade to fill the gap between Macdonald and Lewis.

"But the cockpit of the fight was Macdonald's. The British might avenge his brigade; it was his to keep it and to kill off the attack. To meet it he turned his front through a complete half-circle, facing successively south, west, and north. Every tactician in the army was delirious in praise of Colonel Macdonald. The correspondent was content to watch the man and his blacks. 'Cool as on parade,' is an old phrase; Macdonald Bey was very much cooler. Beneath the strong, square-hewn face you could tell that the brain was working as if packed in ice.

"He sat solid on his horse, and bent his black brow towards the green flag and the Remingtons. Then he turned to a galloper with an order, and cantered easily up to a battalion commander. Magically the rifles hushed, the stinging powder smoke wisped away, and the companies were rapidly threading back and forward, round and round, in and out, as if it were a figure of a dance. In two minutes the brigade was together again in a new place. The field in front was hastening towards us in a whitey-brown cloud of Dervishes. An order!

"Macdonald's jaws gripped and hardened, as the flame spurted out again, and the whitey-brown cloud

quivered and stood still. He saw everything; knew what to do; did it. At the 'Fire' he was ever brooding watchfully behind his firing-line; at the 'Cease fire' he was instantly in front of it. All saw him, and knew that they were being nursed to triumph. His blacks of the 9th, 10th, and 11th—the historic fighting regiments of the Egyptian army—were worthy of their chief. The 2nd Egyptian, brigaded with them and fighting in the line, were worthy of their comrades and of their own reputation as the best disciplined battalion in the world.

"A few feared that the blacks would be too forward, the yellows too backward. Except that the blacks, as always, looked happier, there was no difference at all between them. The Egyptians sprang to the advance at the bugle; the Soudanese ceased fire, in an instant silence, at the whistle. They were losing men, too, for though eyes were clamped on the Dervish charges, the Dervish fire was brisk. Man after man dropped out behind the firing-line. Here was a white officer with a red-lathered charger; there a black stretched straight, bare-headed in the sun, dry-lipped, uncomplaining, a bullet through his liver; two yards away a dead driver by a dead battery mule, his whip still glued in his hand. The table of loss topped 100—150—neared 200. Still they stood, fired, advanced, fired, changed front, fired—firing, firing always, deaf in the din, blind in the smarting smoke; hot, dry, bleeding, bloodthirsty; enduring the devilish fight to the end."

Of the same deed another war correspondent wrote :—

"The Dervishes came on in huge masses, waving their great flags and banners, Macdonald's brigade alone able to resist them. The enemy's cavalry were galloping for all they were worth into Macdonald's thin red line. The sight was fascinating, and it was impossible to unrivet one's eyes from the scene. Steady as a gladiator, with what to some of us looked like inevitable disaster staring them in the face, Colonel Macdonald fought his brigade for all it was worth. The Sirdar stood on the hill with his glasses to his eyes. One could see the anxiety on his face. All this was bad enough, but there was still worse in store; a huge body of Dervishes, which had been hidden among the hills towards Kerrari, were charging down upon Macdonald's right, and would cut off his retreat to the river. All hope seemed to be lost. Reinforcements were tearing up, but would never arrive in time. The boldest held their breath ; the fate of Omdurman lay in the happenings of the next few seconds. Quicker than it takes to tell you, Macdonald broke his line in half and formed a right-angle, the cannons and Maxims were run back by hand, and the new onslaught was met by a deadly fire."

So Macdonald fought—and won.

Of the achievement, Mr. Bennet Burleigh, an old campaigner, whose criticism of any military movement which he has witnessed commands respect,

wrote: "Had the brilliant, the splendid deed of arms wrought by Macdonald been done under the eyes of the Sovereign, or in some other armies, he would have been created a general on the spot. If the public are in search of the real hero of the battle of Omdurman, there he is ready made."

The grand success of the black brigade was the beginning of the end. The battle soon ended. The Khalifa's forces were utterly routed, though they fought with the utmost bravery. The slaughter of the enemy had been terrible. They had 50,000 men engaged. Their casualties were over 30,000—more than 10,000 killed, 16,000 wounded, and the remainder prisoners. The Anglo-Egyptian army numbered about 22,000, or possibly a thousand more. Our total casualties, British and native, were only about 500, and only a very small proportion of these were killed.

By comparison the war correspondents suffered heavily. The Hon. Hubert Howard, of the *Times*, was killed by a stray bullet. Mr. Cross, of the *Manchester Guardian*, subsequently died of fever; Colonel Frank Rhodes, of the *Times*, and Mr. Charles Williams, the veteran war correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, were wounded.

Of this engagement, the Sirdar, in the course of his official despatch, said:—

"The manner in which the brigadiers handled their respective brigades, the thorough knowledge of their profession, and their proved skill in the

field, mark them out, one and all, as fitted for higher rank, and I have great pleasure in submitting their names for favourable consideration: Brigadier-Generals N. G. Lyttleton and A. G. Wauchope; Lieutenant-Colonels J. G. Maxwell, H. A. Macdonald, D. F. Lewis, and J. Collinson.

"Macdonald's brigade was highly tested, bearing the brunt of two severe attacks delivered at very short intervals from different directions, and I am sure it must be a source of the greatest satisfaction to Colonel Macdonald, as it is to myself and the whole army, that the very great care he has for long devoted to the training of his brigade has proved so effectual, enabling his men to behave with the greatest steadiness under most trying circumstances, and repelling most successfully two determined Dervish onslaughts.

"Large stores of ammunition, powder, some sixty guns of various sorts, besides vast quantities of rifles, swords, spears, banners, drums, and other war materials, were captured on the battlefield and in Omdurman.

"The result of the battle is the practical annihilation of the Khalifa's army, the consequent extinction of Mahdism in the Soudan, and the submission of the whole country formerly ruled under Egyptian authority. This has reopened vast territories to the benefits of peace, civilisation, and good government.

"On September 4th the British and Egyptian flags

were hoisted with due ceremony on the walls of the ruined Palace of Khartoum, close to the spot where General Gordon fell, and this event is looked upon by the rejoicing population as marking the commencement of a new era of peace and prosperity for this unfortunate country."

A great achievement truly, and one which Colonel Hector Macdonald had helped so largely to bring about. For his services he was made a C.B. and an A.D.C. to the Queen, and shortly afterwards he was promoted to Brigadier-General and given an important command in India.

CHAPTER XIV

Macdonald's home-coming—A Highland greeting to a Highlander—Presentations and speeches—Army needs—How to get on in the Service—Volunteers and regulars—"I believe conscription will come."

"Maidens! softly touch the clarsach,
Sing your sweetest songs to-day;
Pipers! rouse the magic chanter,
Loud Clan Coila's gathering play.
Clansmen! pledge with Highland honours,
Highlands! cheer our hero's name;
Till the Highland hills re-echo
Back again our Hector's fame.
Caed's caed mille failthe."

FOR many weeks after the Omdurman victory the newspapers, reviews, and magazines at home and abroad were filled with articles on the great British achievements in the Soudan, extolling the services of Kitchener and Macdonald. In the following spring Macdonald, who for so many years had been absent from the country in whose cause he had been fighting, came back to his native land. He had a great reception. He was fêted

everywhere. He was given the hearty grip of the hand by men of all classes. The Prince of Wales, when he met him, said he was proud to do so—proud of the man and of his work. In Scotchmen's veins especially there was a thrill of pride at the achievements of this gallant soldier of the Queen. And Macdonald took his honours with that quiet composure and modesty which have ever distinguished him. As a writer in the *Northern Weekly* said at the time :—

"Colonel Macdonald—literally the hero of a hundred fights—is but a typical Highlander, Highland by birth, name, and upbringing, who has risen by the sheer force of his inborn grit from the ranks of the Highland peasantry to the front rank as a soldier of his country. In this he has but followed in the footsteps of many a 'son of the soil' in these Highlands and Islands who have shed lustre on the page of Britain's military glory, but somehow or other the popular imagination has so fixed itself upon 'the hero of Omdurman' that few, if any, British soldiers at the present moment are so well known and idolised. Colonel Macdonald, however, deserves all the honours that are now being heaped upon him, and his fellow-countrymen in the north have been noting with prideful satisfaction the spirit of quiet humility with which he has been comporting himself during the past few days, in which the best of his country's nobility and gentry have been vying with each other in singing his praises. It is

ever so with the true Highlander—'Bold as an eagle and firm as a rock, but meek as a child.' These words are no mere figures of speech in the case of Colonel Hector Archibald Macdonald, as his life-history as a soldier amply testifies."

Colonel Macdonald, said another contemporary writer, appeals at once to the imaginative, and to those who admire above all things singleness of aim and constancy of purpose: "To the former he comes invested with all the glamour accruing from that September morning display of inspired leadership. The war correspondents have told us, with many an exclamation of delight, how the coolness of this one man prevented the victory of Omdurman from being purchased at a terribly heavy price; how before a sudden unexpected onslaught of two bodies of the enemy he remained collected, intrepid, and splendidly daring, and brought his black brigade victoriously through a most dangerous evolution.

"So long as the battle of Omdurman is recalled, and whether by Little Englander or rabid Imperialist, so long will Colonel Macdonald's change of formation in front of the advancing horde be remembered with a thrill of admiration and pride. Colonel Macdonald is, too, a man after the plodding people's own heart—one of the shining examples of 'self-help.' Entering the army by its broadest door—that open to all of inches and physique—he rose by steady application to the

duties of his adopted profession, through all the grades open to the non-commissioned man until he stood at the dividing line; then a striking display of his inborn military genius in the Afghan war took him across that and set him on the way to greater things which he has now accomplished. He has much still to do, and while we would hope that in our Indian Empire, to which he will shortly go, his soldierly qualities may not be called out in action, we know that his exceptional powers of command, his ability to bring out the best that is in his men, be they native or European, will there have full scope."

Early in May there was a great Saturday evening gathering at the Hotel Cecil of the combined Highland Societies of London, at which a sword of honour was presented to him, on behalf of a representative company of Scotchmen, by the Duke of Atholl. General Sir Evelyn Wood, speaking on that occasion, said the object of the Sirdar (who was now Lord Kitchener of Khartoum) at Omdurman was to keep the Dervishes out of the city, because he would have lost thousands instead of hundreds if he had had to fight those wild cats from house to house, and "therefore he trusted to this man here (Colonel Macdonald) to receive a flank attack."

The Duke of Atholl, himself a notable Highlander, described how this "son of the soil" had risen from the bottom of the ladder to be a full Colonel and Queen's Aide-de-Camp, with his breast

covered with medals. He presented the sword and buckled it on the Colonel's side, expressing confidence that in the Colonel's hands it would be used in accordance with the old Spanish legend: "Draw me not without reason; sheath me not without honour." In returning his thanks for the gift, Colonel Macdonald said little about himself and much about the ability of his chiefs and the services of every branch of the Sirdar's army, claiming, with his usual modesty, little personal credit for the great victories.

Proceeding next to Scotland, Colonel Macdonald was present at a luncheon given in his honour at the Bank restaurant in Queen's Street, Glasgow; and in the same city, from the members of the Clan Macdonald Society, he received another sword of honour. Later he proceeded home to Ross-shire, where a right royal Highland greeting was accorded him. At Dingwall, Tain, Aberdeen, Inverness, and several other places addresses were presented to him. He received the freedom of half a dozen boroughs. When Macdonald went to a Scotch town for any one of these public functions the day was observed as a general holiday. Remembering the gallant soldier's early life in Dingwall, it is interesting to recall the impressions of his fellow-countrymen there, one of whom, writing in the journal from which I have previously quoted, thus described the Colonel on the occasion of the Dingwall presentation:—

"The man who handled the black brigade with such consummate skill, and who, by his example, made them maintain that perfect discipline which converted what looked like a forlorn hope into a brilliant victory, visibly flinched under the greeting of his fellow-countrymen. Yet, after seating himself in the chair, and having time to look around, he became cool, calm, and collected again. As one looked upon his sturdy form and strongly cast features, with the lower part of his face recalling in a striking manner the strong and determined mould of the Napoleonic countenance, one could not help seeing that 'Hector,' as we heard him repeatedly called by admirers in the crowd, was a soldier all the time, and, wearing his bright scarlet tunic, the breast of which was covered with orders, medals, and clasps, he was the very picture of what he really is—a true hero. In common with many others we felt, as we looked upon the hero's manly and typically Highland face, that most of the public portraits of him have been deceiving. He is not by any means a man of the dour, dogged, heavy type. He is quite the opposite; eager, alert, sometimes almost restless, with keen eye and penetrating, and the mouth and chin of a born leader of men. Below the medium height, but sturdily built, with dark hair, his face remarkably free from the lines of discipline which one would expect to see in a soldier so seasoned to the battlefield, one discovers strength and power the

moment one's eyes rest on the firmly set but reposeful features, suggestive of immense and ready resolution, a man of indomitable pluck and never-failing resourcefulness. Such was Hector Macdonald as he sat on that platform in Dingwall on Thursday surrounded by so brilliant a gathering of the great and brave and fair, and faced by a crowd of about 7,000 of his fellow-countrymen."

Colonel Macdonald's words of thanks for the honour done him were brief and heartfelt. "It is well known," he said, "that the people of Ross and Cromarty have warm hearts and are a united people. When leaving far-off Egypt to visit my native home again, the man whom I last spoke to and whose hand I last shook was a Ross-shire man. Most of you know him very well. On my arrival in London I was received in a cordial manner by a Ross-shire lady, whom also you know very well; and now I feel, when I have arrived at my home and am received by a whole country, I wish you to understand that it was only by sheer hard work and by devotion to duty that I have been enabled to come here to-day to receive your warm greetings; and I should wish to impress upon the youth I now see before me that it is the only way to get on in this world."

At another function in the same town Colonel Macdonald made a brief speech which was, indeed, the text of all his remarks. He then said:—

"There was nothing pleased me more, however,

than the reference to my superior officer, Lord Kitchener of Khartoum. Were it not for his wisdom, his foresight, and his indomitable energy, there is no question that the Khartoum campaign would not have had the successful issue which you now applaud. He it was who planned, and he it was who executed, and others were the simple instruments in his hands towards an end, and if we fulfilled his behests, all honour to him. You mentioned another officer for whom I have the greatest affection and esteem — Sir Archibald Hunter. I thank you very deeply for doing so, for no more gallant officer, no more zealous soldier, ever breathed. Again I thank you. Although many of you are comparative strangers to me—nearly all of you—I thank you deeply from the bottom of my heart for the very cordial welcome you have accorded me on coming home to my native place."

In view of later events in South Africa, of the claims which have been made upon the country for army service in consequence, and the discussions which have ensued on the subject of the country's military needs and the means of supplying them, some remarks made by Colonel Macdonald at this time on the questions of the volunteer service and conscription are of peculiar interest. After leaving Dingwall, Colonel Macdonald proceeded to Invergordon. Speaking at that place he said: "He had seen a great number of volunteers since he had come back, but he could not help saying that he

would rather see the regular soldier. By what he said he did not mean anything detrimental to the volunteers, but he could not help saying, as he had said before, that were it not for volunteering there would be more regulars. Volunteering had now been put on such a footing that it was pleasant and nice. They were so well looked after by their officers, and they had so many good things in their drill-halls, that they rested perfectly satisfied that they were doing everything that was required of them by their country. Perhaps so. European Powers had such large armies of regular soldiers that it behoved them to take means to be equal to them in every possible way. He hoped the day was not far distant when they would have that means, which, in his opinion, was conscription."

At Tain arrangements were made for the Colonel's reception and the presentation of an address by Provost Fowler and Mr. John Mackenzie, the Town Clerk. Well might Macdonald, in accepting the invitation, have said—

> "We twa hae ran about the braes
> And pu'd the gowans fine;
> We twa hae paidl't in the burn,
> Frae mornin' sin till dine;
> But seas between us braid hae roar'd
> Sin auld lang syne."

His remarks there were all about the simple soldier's duty which alone he claimed to have done. "It is a great honour," he remarked, "to a man

like myself that whatever we do, even the performance of a light duty, receives recognition by his countrymen. But I cannot conceive why you should put it in the form of an address and of such an enthusiastic reception. I cannot see why soldiers are not permitted to do their duty as well as other people in other walks of life, without being fêted as I have been. I had many qualms of conscience when I accepted the kind invitation of my old comrade, your Provost; but on due consideration I thought that perhaps I might be an agent and do something in the way of getting a few recruits for the army—and then it would be another honour if some of those nice lads I see before me would take it into their heads to go and do as I have done."

During his visit to Aberdeen Colonel Macdonald went to the University and was entertained by the Corporation. He also went to the Castlehill barracks, the depôt of the 75th Regimental District, where in the barrack square he inspected recruits and gave them the following advice: "Be sober, respectful, and obedient; always remembering the good name of your regiment rather than yourselves, and such conduct will bring its own reward, with the result that you will spend many happy days in the army." At another public function in the same city he remarked: "Were they (the War Office authorities) more fully alive to the altered circumstances of the country, and held out more inducements, either in the way of pay or in the way of

conscription, they would do more good to the army."

Further remarks on the subject of conscription were made in the course of a conversation with a representative of the *Aberdeen Journal*, which were reported in that newspaper on May 19, 1899.

After some introductory remarks in reference to his allusions to conscription in several speeches, the pressman said—

"Then, Colonel, what do you really think of conscription?"

"Oh," he laughingly replied, "don't call it conscription, for you know it will never do to call it by that name."

"And do you think the country is ripe for conscription?"

"My own opinion is it will come, but it will only come by a gradual process, and it is this—that the country must wake up to the fact that the army cannot compete with the labour market, and as they cannot compete with the labour market they must go in for a liberal conscription, from which neither rich nor poor should be exempted. I am not speaking authoritatively, you will understand, as from the War Office, but that is certainly my own private opinion."

"In other words, you would have a system such as at present prevails in Germany?"

"Scarcely in the same style; but I believe conscription will come, and it will be good for the army and good for the country when it does come."

CHAPTER XV

From India to South Africa—His country's call at a critical moment—At work under Lord Roberts again—Leading the Highland Brigade as successor to Wauchope—The Koodoosberg reconnaissance—Fighting against Cronje—Battle of Paardeberg—Macdonald wounded—The surrender of Cronje—Macdonald enters Bloemfontein with Lord Roberts—A relative's impressions of the Highland General.

HECTOR MACDONALD was able to spend some months in his native land. He had been fêted everywhere by every one. But, after the great work of festivities, he was able to take a rest, which must have been a delightful change. The rest was not to be for long. Soon, now as Major-General, he received a most important appointment—that of Commander-in-Chief of the Sirhind district in India. From that position he was ordered at the beginning of the present year to proceed to South Africa, to succeed Major-General Wauchope as commander of the Highland Brigade.

It is no business of mine to deal in this volume with the causes of the South African war. President Kruger had issued an ultimatum which amounted to

a declaration of war against this country. The Orange Free State threw in its lot with the Transvaal. Kruger followed the ultimatum by an invasion of Natal and Cape Colony. General Sir Redvers Buller had been sent out from England to command our forces. It became speedily and painfully evident that the Government had under-estimated the forces which were to be brought against us. General Buller proceeded to Natal, where he was to accomplish the task of relieving Ladysmith. It proved to be one of the most difficult duties ever undertaken by a British force. Soon the fact was recognised that Buller would be fully occupied for months in Natal. Consequently it was impossible for him at the same time to be directing the operations in the rest of South Africa. Lords Roberts and Kitchener, under both of whom Major-General Macdonald had rendered, in India and Egypt, such distinguished services to his country, were ordered to South Africa. Roberts went under circumstances of the most pathetic character. This Grand Old Man of the British army, well on to seventy years of age, answered to the call of Queen and country when his only son, who had performed a deed that was fitted for the hall-mark of the Victoria Cross, was lying dead on the troublous field of South Africa. Lord Kitchener, probably the ablest organiser in the British army after Roberts, went from Egypt, and joined his chief on the way to the Cape.

Macdonald at the same time was instructed to leave his command in India, and to take, under his old chiefs, the head of the Highland Brigade, which had suffered a dire disaster at the battle of Magersfontein, when Major-General Wauchope, the gallant head of that gallant brigade, was killed. Wauchope had also served with Macdonald in Egypt. The Highland Brigade included the Black Watch, Gordon Highlanders, Seaforths, Argylls and Sutherlands.

Major-General Macdonald reached South Africa as speedily as possible, and entered that country not many weeks before, under Lord Roberts' direction, the old Majuba Day was to be marked by a great British victory which was to retrieve the disaster of 1881, in which, as I have stated, Macdonald had played a part.

Something may be said to show the spirit of that Highland Brigade at the time. It will best be done by an extract from the graphic account of the burial of Wauchope which was sent by a special correspondent of the *Daily News*. That account was quoted by every newspaper of importance in England, and has been correctly described as an incident of war correspondence which will ever live.

At that funeral service "only the dead man's son and a small remnant of his officers stood with the chaplain and the pipers whilst the solemn service of the Church was spoken.

"Then once again the pipes pealed out, and 'Lochaber no More' cut through the stillness like

a cry of pain, until one could almost hear the widow in her Highland home moaning for the soldier she would welcome back no more. Then, as if touched by the magic of one thought, the soldiers turned their tear-damp eyes from the still form in the shallow grave towards the heights where Cronje, the 'lion of Africa,' and his soldiers stood.

"Then every cheek flushed crimson, and the strong jaws set like steel, and the veins on the hands that clasped the rifle handles swelled almost to bursting with the fervour of the grip, and that look from those silent, armed men spoke more eloquently than ever spoke the tongues of orators. For on each frowning face the spirit of vengeance sat, and each sparkling eye asked silently for blood. . . .

"At the head of the grave, at the point nearest the enemy, the General was laid to sleep, his officers grouped around him, whilst in line behind him his soldiers were laid in a double row, wrapped in their blankets. No shots were fired over the dead men resting so peacefully, only the salute was given, and then the men marched campwards as the darkness of an African night rolled over the far-stretching breadth of the veldt.

"To the gentlewoman who bears their General's name the Highland Brigade sends its deepest sympathy. To the mothers and the wives, the sisters and the sweethearts in cottage homes by hillside and glen, they send their love and good wishes. Sad will their Christmas be, sadder the new year. Yet enshrined in every womanly heart, from Queen-

Empress to cottage girl, let their memory lie, the memory of the men of the Highland Brigade who died at Magersfontein."

The witnesses of that scene were the Highlanders to whom Hector Macdonald belonged. They were the men whom he was very fittingly to command.

General Macdonald reached Cape Town from India in the third week in January, and proceeded at once to Modder River. He had been there little more than a week when, with the Highland Brigade, the 9th Lancers, and a battery of field artillery, he left Lord Methuen's camp and proceeded to Koodoosberg Drift, fourteen miles to the west.

At 9 a.m. on February 7th the enemy established guns on the north end of Koodoosberg and shelled the breastworks which Macdonald was constructing to protect the drift.

On the right bank of the river, holding the south end of Koodoosberg, were the Black Watch, half-battalion Seaforth, one company of Highland Light Infantry, and four guns of the 62nd Field Battery. At the drift were seven companies of the Highland Light Infantry. On the left bank were the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the remainder of the Seaforths, and two guns, the 9th Lancers observing both flanks.

After firing shrapnel for some time, the enemy made a determined effort to drive the Highlanders off Koodoosberg. Reinforcements of three companies Highland Light Infantry and four companies Sea-

forths were sent up in succession, and the position was successfully maintained, firing going on till dark.

Meanwhile, at Macdonald's request, General Babington had been despatched from Modder River at 11.30 a.m. on the 7th with his own regiment, cavalry, and two batteries Horse Artillery. Marching by the right bank, he threatened the north of Koodoosberg, while on the left bank the 9th Lancers, supported by two guns and two companies Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, drove the enemy back to Painter's Drift.

The enemy were forced to evacuate the position, which, however, they made desperate efforts to retain. Heavy guns had shelled the British force, but our artillery silenced those guns. It was only after a day's fighting, in which the Highlanders greatly distinguished themselves, that the enemy were forced to retire.

The position gained by Macdonald was important. His movement was the more valuable as it diverted the attention of the Boers from the general plans of Lord Roberts. Much astonishment was caused in this country when, almost immediately afterwards, Lord Methuen ordered the withdrawal of General Macdonald's force from Koodoosberg, "under instructions from headquarters," as the telegrams from the front announced. "The movement, which was only a reconnaissance, had a most excellent effect." The retirement from the position was carried out

after a desultory skirmish in perfect order, and the withdrawal was described as being effected "in a workmanlike manner."

General Macdonald, returning from this successful reconnaissance, was to take part in that great and skilful operation which led to the surrender of the Boer General, Cronje, and upwards of 4,000 of his men. General Roberts' plans were carefully hidden and most skilfully and unexpectedly carried out. He succeeded in practically surrounding General Cronje's force. From the camp on the Modder River on February 16th a great cloud of dust was seen. It was the beginning of a movement the object of which was to outwit Lord Roberts. It was "Bobs" who did the outwitting. General Knox's brigade was immediately ordered out with two field batteries. The Boers held a strong position, and kept it in the hope that their transport would get through. General Macdonald and the Highland Brigade moved out to cut off the retreat by the main drifts to the east. "Fighting Mac" had to stop by reason of his oxen giving out through fatigue.

The general movement, however, succeeded, and Macdonald got part of his force across to the south of the river, and General Cronje was brought to bay. A terrible cannonade, of which the Highland Brigade got the full benefit, was poured in upon our forces for several days. In an engagement at Paardeberg Drift, one of the most hotly contested of the campaign, General Macdonald was severely wounded.

The engagement was of a very severe nature, and it was one regarding which the foreign experts who witnessed it—and the foreign experts were at all times most critical—paid, in the messages they sent home to their Governments, a high tribute to the strategical art of Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener. The Paardeberg battle began on Saturday, February 17th. On the previous Thursday we had come into contact with the Boer rear-guard at Klip Kraal, and it was then seen that the enemy were making desperate efforts to get through to Bloemfontein before their line of retreat was cut off. Our infantry held the enemy in check until our reinforcements arrived. Generals Kitchener and French subsequently arrived, and our army descended towards the river in the direction of Paardeberg Drift.

The enemy were in the river bed, protected by the high banks and dongas. The Highland Brigade, supported by the Gloucesters, West Ridings, Oxfords, and Buffs, received orders to advance and clear the river bank of the enemy. Forward they went with a cheer, but as soon as they were within a thousand yards of the Boers, a murderous fire was poured in upon them.

Our men were advancing upon a naturally strong position, one in which the Boers were comparatively safe, for the natural advantages of the country afforded them excellent protection from our fire. Our men, on the other hand, had to advance across open land, where there was no cover.

On the open veldt they made fine marks for the Boer snipers.

A special correspondent of a daily newspaper thus describes what followed:—"There was only the open veldt, as devoid of cover as the palm of one's hand and as flat as a turnpike road in England. At the first fusillade our men faltered and fell back a short distance, then quickly grasping the situation and realising what was expected of them, down they went flat on their stomachs, and, with the help of their bayonets, soon contrived to throw up sufficient earth to afford them some protection. Under a withering fire they remained in this position the whole day, firing volleys into the river banks, and thus keeping the enemy's fire down, whilst General Smith-Dorien got round on their left with a battery of artillery.

General Macdonald was leading the Highland Brigade to the attack when he was struck below the knee-cap by a Mauser bullet which went round behind the knee and, travelling upwards, emerged just below the hip. It then penetrated the saddle and killed the General's horse. To his great regret he was compelled to be out of the fighting for the remainder of that engagement and for some time afterwards.

Fighting under great difficulties the result of the Highland Brigade's advance was accomplished during the day. Lord Roberts reached the scene of the operations on the Sunday, and on the

Monday evening the Boers were driven across the river. Cronje then sent a request for an armistice for twenty-four hours, and it was expected that he would at once surrender. He determined, however, to fight on.

The next few days were taken up in desultory firing, the British troops gradually, but surely, encircling the enemy, and getting close enough to strike the final blow.

After a prolonged period of feverish activity and no little anxiety, the end came, and Cronje surrendered with his entire army. This great victory, which General Macdonald had helped to bring about, came on the anniversary of Majuba Day, and caused the greatest satisfaction. It must have been a source of peculiar gratification to General Macdonald, who has never forgotten that day long ago in 1881 when he had to surrender to the Boers on Majuba Hill. That day was now avenged.

Lord Roberts' successful operations materially relieved the pressure round Ladysmith and undoubtedly helped General Buller to relieve that town, after one of the most doggedly persevering efforts ever made against an enemy. Ladysmith was relieved on March 18th, the event being celebrated in London and throughout the British Empire in a most enthusiastic manner.

General Macdonald, severely wounded as he was, refused to return to Capetown, asserting that a few days would see him quite well again. His wound,

however, kept him out of the fighting for longer than he anticipated. Nevertheless, he kept at the front, and he was with Lord Roberts when, on March 13th, the British troops marched unopposed into Bloemfontein, and Lord Roberts sent a despatch which caused delirious joy in England, where the reverses of the early portion of the campaign had been received with marvellous coolness, and where, at last, long-pent-up feelings had the delights of reaction.

Lord Roberts' message was as follows:—

"BLOEMFONTEIN, *March 13th*, 8 p.m.

"By the help of God, and by the bravery of her Majesty's soldiers, the troops under my command have taken possession of Bloemfontein.

"The British flag now flies over the Presidency, vacated last evening by Mr. Steyn, late President of the Orange Free State.

"Mr. Fraser, member of the late Executive Government, the Mayor, the Secretary to the late Government, the Landdrost, and other officials met me two miles from the town and presented me with the keys of the public offices.

"The enemy have withdrawn from the neighbourhood, and all seems quiet.

"The inhabitants of Bloemfontein gave the troops a cordial welcome."

And at Bloemfontein I leave, for the present, that

gallant soldier, Major-General Hector Macdonald. The first stage of the war has ended. The British have had severe reverses and learned hard lessons. But they have now gained great victories. Ladysmith and Kimberley have been relieved. A Boer army has been captured. A British army of enormous strength, under our ablest Generals, aided by troops from every British Colony, and supported in kind by native Princes of India, is in the field. In the subsequent stages of the war, General Macdonald, now recovered and returned to the head of the Highland Brigade, is sure to play a distinguished part.

It is interesting, in concluding this account of the life of Major-General Macdonald up to the present time, when he is still fighting for his country in South Africa, to record an expression of his personal character which has been given to me by one of his nearest relatives, who says :—

"Hector is very decided and methodical in everything he does. He says little, but what he does say is always to the point. He is jovial and merry-hearted; but can be stern and decided when duty calls. He never loses himself, and is always cool and collected. One leading trait in his character is to see through a situation, and when an emergency comes to act promptly.

"Hector Macdonald is a warm-hearted, loving, and attached friend, and can enter into all the sorrows and joys of civil life. He is very much attached

to the Highlands and everything belonging to them.

"Anything savouring of sham he hates. Simplicity is marked in everything he does. He is a non-smoker and most abstemious. He favours religion: and has a strong trust in God."

UNWIN BROTHERS, THE GRESHAM PRESS, WOKING AND LONDON

00026084

Digitized with financial assistance from

H T Parekh
FOUNDATION

An Initiative by
HDFC
WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 27 November, 2018